

Alexandra Palace and Park Consultative Committee – Working Group

Report of Working Group meeting on 29 November 2010

Work in progress

Purpose of the Group:

To review the effectiveness of the Consultative Committee (CC), its working relationship with the Board, its association with the Statutory Advisory Committee (SAC), and to make recommendations.

Attendance:

Gordon Hutchinson, Jacob O’Callaghan, Colin Marr (chairman), Colin Richell and Nigel Willmott - with Natalie Cole as scribe,

Points made in discussion – comments, consensus and observations:

- The overall objective of the Working Group is to help improve the effectiveness of how the CC works, both with and for the Board, and the SAC.
- In this context, the effectiveness of the CC (and SAC) is greatly enhanced if the Board can maintain a level of openness and timeliness in bringing matters to the CC (and SAC) as they are being formulated rather than when a way forward has already been decided by the Trust's staff or Board.
- The essential difference between the SAC and the CC is that the SAC has a statutory role defined by the 1985 Act and can give advice to the Board, which it has to accept or reject – whereas there is no formal requirement for the Board to respond to the CC.
- In practice the work and outputs from the SAC and the CC are quite complementary and not in conflict.
- There is a strong case for a single or joint committee to cover both the SAC and CC – this is driven by the need for increased effectiveness as much as it is by the need for economy. Meetings of a joint committee could be more easily phased to meet the timetable for Board meetings.
- Although the SAC was established under the AP&P Act, its Terms of Reference are in part not fixed and immovable – some aspects of membership could be changed with prior agreement by the Charity Commission and Trustees, but this would take time to bring about.
- A weakness in the current structure of the SAC is its limitation to representations from residents associations directly bordering onto the Park, and the absence of national bodies and wider interests.

- The absence of trustee–councillors in the membership of the SAC can also lead to the SAC being not as well informed as it should be about the affairs of the Board.
- The large size of a joint committee could be a problem, but there could be some common membership and some groups could be represented in a different way, e.g. lessees and trade unions, who are currently covered by the CC. More thought needs to be given to a ‘stakeholder group/ forum’ to cover the wider interests of some of the peripheral bodies.
- In the long term it would be desirable for the joint committee to be chaired by an independent advisor/ trustee, but this would not be practicable in the short term.
- The Working Group agreed to recommend merger/ integration between the CC and SAC that could be phased so as to provide for a model arrangement to be implemented in the short term and a longer term model to be implemented later. Both models are detailed in the following recommendations.

Recommendations

Two operating models are recommended - to be implemented in sequence:

Model 1, for immediate implementation – a Joint SAC / CC

This model comprises:

- Joint meetings of the combined membership of the existing SAC and CC.
- Meetings to be in two parts, the first under an independent chairman (to be determined) and the second part (probably shorter) under the chairman of the SAC. This would allow all members to address agenda items of common interest in the first plenary part, with the SAC chair taking over the second part for SAC members to vote at the end on any resolutions and items for advice to the Board.
- Board members of the CC and the Board chair would be expected to attend and all attendees would be expected to be there for the duration of the meeting, which should be no longer than the current maximum of two hours.
- Meetings would be held in advance of Board meetings, so as to provide inputs to them and at other times as necessary.

Advantages of this approach:

- The SAC does not lose its statutory role and authority
- The meetings will be better informed as a result of wider membership, e.g. from Board members and more representative, e.g. from national groups as well as other residents associations.
- There would be fewer meetings overall and they can be better phased with the Board’s timetable

- Could be implemented without delay.

Disadvantages of this approach:

- The large size of the committee could be cumbersome at first, but could be eased by dual membership and some delegation.
- Some confusion at first from chairmanship changes during a meeting.

Model 2, for later implementation – a reconstituted ‘SACC’

To be implemented as soon as practicable, but it may take a year or so to bring about - this model comprises:

- A reconstituted committee, in effect a ‘Statutory Advisory and Consultative Committee’ to include the full authority of the ‘old’ SAC but with wider membership - this to be legitimised by the Charity Commission with approval of Trustees.
- The Chairman and Vice-chairman would be appointed by this new committee using whatever degrees of authority that can be retained from the ‘old’ SAC.
- Other aspects are to be resolved, including how to consult with stakeholders who would be outside the scope of the SACC.

Advantages of this approach:

- Streamlines some of the complexity of Model 1
- Retains all the advantages from Model 1 listed above.

Disadvantages of this approach:

- Might take time and persuasion to get the necessary agreement from the Charity Commission.

Colin Marr

6 December 2010