

Minutes

PETITION HEARING - CABINET MEMBER FOR RESIDENTS' SERVICES

27 June 2023

Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW



	<p>Committee Members Present: Councillors Eddie Lavery</p> <p>Officers Present: Stuart Hunt, Head of Green Spaces Richard Webb, Director Community Safety & Enforcement Ryan Dell, Democratic Services Officer Rebecca Reid, Democratic Services Apprentice</p> <p>Ward Councillors Present: Councillor Reeta Chamdal (item 4)</p> <p>Councillors Present: Councillor Roy Chamdal (item 4)</p>
1.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN MATTERS COMING BEFORE THIS MEETING <i>(Agenda Item 1)</i></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
2.	<p>TO CONFIRM THAT THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE IN PUBLIC <i>(Agenda Item 2)</i></p> <p>It was confirmed that the business of the meeting would take place in public.</p>
3.	<p>TO CONSIDER THE REPORT OF THE OFFICERS ON THE FOLLOWING PETITION RECEIVED: <i>(Agenda Item 3)</i></p>
4.	<p>PETITION REQUESTING A DOG PARK IN DOWDING PARK <i>(Agenda Item 4)</i></p> <p>The Cabinet Member considered a petition requesting a Dog Park in Dowding Park.</p> <p>The lead petitioner, firstly, introduced himself as Chairman of St Andrews Park Residents Association, Director of a Resident Management Company, and a local dog owner. The lead petitioner provided an additional document which outlined possible plans for the dog park.</p> <p>In requesting the construction of a dog safe area in Dowding Park, the petitioner put forward to the Cabinet Member suggestions and reasons for why one should be introduced. Key points raised by the petitioner included:</p> <p>Constructing a dog play park had potential to increase the Council's revenue stream by over £10,000 by being able to rent out space for a safe, easy, and</p>

reliable area for dog training locally.

Although the petition originally received 100 signatures, there were at least 150 to 200 dogs that lived within walking distance of Dowding Park that regularly used the park.

With potentially 1,000 new flats being built in Town Centre West, there could be 100's more pets that would require a space for training and physical activity for enjoyment of life.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, pets were especially beneficial to residents for their mental health but were unable to socialise adequately due to lockdown guidance. The result of this was that some dogs developed a multitude of mental and physical health issues which meant they could not be left off-lead. The benefit to dogs of being off lead was the drive to exercise to their fullest ability which reduced their health risks.

There would be no harm to the environment or extra litter produced by constructing a dog play park because there were already waste bins at both potential exits of the dog park in areas requested by the petitioner that would add no additional waste-removal cost or resources to the Council. Existing waste bins would potentially only need to be collected on one additional day than the usual waste collection time.

To reduce the impact fences and gates would have on the aesthetic of the environment from constructing a dog park, natural water boundaries and tree lines could be used to line the dog park. This would also enable local wildlife to continue to have access to the dog park.

Dividing the proposed dog park into two sections, namely one for small dogs and the other for large dogs, would allow dogs contact with their own kind, as not all dogs would get along.

The financial impact on the Council of constructing a dog park would be mitigated by the income, physical and mental health benefits that would come from the residents and their pets who were also residents of Hillingdon.

Constructing a dog safe area in Dowding Park could provide ground for other parks in Hillingdon, since there were currently no dog parks within Hillingdon's parks and open spaces. Although not classified as a dog park, there existed a dog safe area in Hammersmith and Fulham that was fully fenced off from cars, pedestrians and foreign objects which allowed for access to have dogs off lead in a safe environment.

The Cabinet Member asked for clarification in respect of the petitioner's point around receiving rent for the dog park. The petitioner clarified if the dog park was left as an open free-for-all space, conflict could arise between socially trained dogs and dogs that were not socially trained sharing the same space. By allowing the dog park to be rented out, as was done for pay to play Council run tennis courts, this could increase the benefit of one person using that dog space for a specific time slot at a suggested charge of £2 for 30 minutes. It was suggested that local dog owners would be happy with this. If dog owners wished to bring in other dogs for socialisation during their own training time that could be permitted in a safe environment.

Councillor Reeta Chamdal attended as Ward Councillor for Hillingdon West and

addressed the Cabinet Member. The key points raised were:

Dowding Park was primarily built for the residents of St Andrew's Park estate. Additional new flats scheduled to be built could create better potential for dog owners to use the dog park.

There was no park in the Borough that safeguarded dogs from running into the road, but this well thought out proposal, if introduced, would put Hillingdon on the map as an innovative Council that was thinking outside the box.

Introducing the dog park would make it a safe place to train and exercise dogs off lead.

Potential revenue for the Council could be extended to other parks in the Borough.

The Ward Councillor fully supported the petition request as a dog owner and urged the Cabinet Member to consider the proposal, highlighting that they were open to suggestions and amendments to make the recommendation more viable. The petitioner noted that they would be happy for a dog park to be implemented in an alternative location if this were more suitable.

The Cabinet Member listened to and acknowledged the requests and opinions of the petitioner and Ward Councillor and noted that the costs of collecting £2 for 30 minutes from residents could exceed the revenue achieved. There could also be fencing costs.

The Head of Green Spaces commented on whether the section of the park to be used for the dog park area, if implemented, was closely mowed or non-biodiverse. Officers noted the area of the park was left to grow naturally and was cut once a year with paths running through. It was one of the remaining pieces of grassland that was retained throughout the whole development of the site. Aerial photos from 2008 to 2019 demonstrated that the said area was maintained as grassland. It was described as 'floristically rich' because of the old river meadows. The Head of Green Spaces added that the biodiversity impact would need to be considered, as the grassland would need to be closely mowed for the dogs to run and readily access it.

The petitioner responded that the grassland required little additional mowing and suggested having one extra time to mow the grass per year. This was because most animals loved to run through long grass and this was fine with most dog owners.

The Head of Green Spaces listened to and acknowledged but responded that there were notable challenges within long grass management, such as the problem of dog faeces in long grass where some owners may not pick up dog litter, and dog faeces in long grass would also make such waste more difficult to collect.

The Cabinet Member noted they would consider the petition request in wider policy terms and consult Green Spaces.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet Member:

- 1. Met with petitioners and listened to their request to have a dog park added to Dowding Park; and**

	2. Asked officers to consider the proposals further
5.	<p>PETITION REQUESTING IMPROVED SECURITY AND SAFETY IN ALLEYWAY BETWEEN POPLARS CLOSE AND RUISLIP HIGH STREET (<i>Agenda Item 5</i>)</p> <p>The Cabinet Member considered a petition requesting improved security and safety in an alleyway between Poplars Close and Ruislip High Street.</p> <p>That the Cabinet Member for Residents' Services:</p> <p>1. Noted the assessment carried out by Council officers on the potential viability of measures that could be introduced in this alleyway and the likely effectiveness of those measures in achieving the benefits sought by the petitioners;</p> <p>2. Noted that installing additional lighting in the alleyway would be a matter for the adjacent property owners who would need to consent, may not reduce anti-social behaviour and could have an impact in on neighbouring properties; and</p> <p>3. Noted the officer's initial assessment that there was no suitable nearby lamp column upon which a CCTV camera could be installed which would provide adequate coverage of the alleyway without intrusion into private property.</p>
	The meeting, which commenced at 6.00 pm, closed at 6.20 pm.

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Democratic Services at petitions@hillington.gov.uk. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.