

**Blackheath Joint Working Party
Annual Public Meeting
25th February 2014, 7.30pm**

Old Bakehouse Theatre

1. Introduction

Councillor Chris Maines (Blackheath Ward) opened the Blackheath Joint Working Party (BJWP) Annual Public meeting and outlined the activities of the Working Party and some key achievements over the last year. This included:

- Work on landscaping and protecting acid grass lands.
- Parking and the need to address issues around St Germain's Place and cars turning around on the Heath.
- Working with LOCOG to bring back Circus Field following the Olympics.
- Working with the Council on the introduction of new memorial benches.
- Working on improving the roundabout by St Germain's Place
- Working with the Blackheath Ward Assembly on their proposal to introduce a Play Space on the heath.
- The introduction of a telephone number to report issues during events on the Heath.
- Discussions on event applications including a Tennis Screen application for Wimbledon, OnBlackheath and Good Hope Festival.
- The award of a Green Flag for Blackheath.
- A World War 2 fighter pilot memorial at The Point.

Martin Hyde (Lewisham Council's Parks Regeneration Manager) added some further points. This included:

- Working closely to improve the grass cutting regime for the Heath and the cultivation of meadow grass lands.
- Working closely with the Westcombe Society to protect acid grass lands.
- Work currently ongoing to explore the options of bollards on St Germain's Place to prevent cars from turning around on the Heath.
- The BJWP was exploring funding with the London FA to improve Blackheath changing rooms.
- As part of the discussion on the Good Hope Festival and OnBlackheath, provisos for holding the event had been put in place, this included attendance limits of 15,000 per day, that the background noise level will not exceed more than 15dB over a 15 minute period when measured 1 metre from façade of the nearest noise sensitive premises, events organisers feeding back where people are attending from in order to manage the flows of people and a full debrief of the events in October, which will then inform the decision to hold future events in 2015.

2. Public Questions

Councillor Maines opened up the meeting to public comment and questions.

The following points were raised and discussed at the meeting:

- A question was raised as to how the BJWP Public Meeting was advertised to residents. The meeting was informed that this was done through the societies that formed part of the BJWP.

- It was noted that the meeting was changed from the 18th February due to the room not being available.
- A question was asked as to what is entailed under a License in Perpetuity. It was stated that there were two forms of licence, one for a one off event and the other for events that are planned to be held again. Those events that are planned to be held again need to apply for a License in Perpetuity, which are then reviewed each year. The group was informed that prior to an event taking place under either of these licenses, the authorising officer from the Council is required to approve the event.
- A question was raised on how Greenwich and Lewisham Council co-operate on events held on the Heath. The meeting was informed that a Blackheath Events Policy had been agreed by the Mayor of Lewisham and the Royal Borough of Greenwich, which sets out the policy for both Councils in relation to events and activities taking place on Blackheath.
- A question was raised on whether re-assurance can be given on controlling the number of events held on the Heath. It was noted that the BJWP have on the agenda of their October meeting an item to consider whether a figure should be set limiting the number of events on the Heath.
- The meeting was informed that the authorising officer could not attend the meeting due to a prior engagement. The group were informed that an invitation would be extended to the authorising officer for the next Blackheath Ward Assembly.
- A question was raised as to why the authorising officer from Lewisham Council had agreed the OnBlackheath event to be held. It was noted that the officer had chosen not to follow the advice of the BJWP as they felt it was good to have the OnBlackheath and Good Hope events on the Heath and that until the first events are held the impact is not yet known. A letter setting out the approval of the authorising officer sent to BJWP could be circulated.
- A question was raised on what would happen if an organisation applied for an event next year on the same weekend as an event already planned. It was noted that if an event was already planned for the same weekend it would likely be declined. It was also noted that there would be consideration given to the cumulative impact of multiple festivals over a short period.
- The meeting was informed that the Lewisham Events Safety Advisory Group (LEWSAG) meets every 6 weeks and discusses the OnBlackheath event and that if at any point they are not happy with the safety of the event then it will not go ahead.
- Councillor Amanda De Ryk (Blackheath) informed the meeting that the BJWP have representation on the LEWSAG for the OnBlackheath festival and that an invite has been extended for a representative to attend from Greenwich Licensing. The group also has representatives from the Metropolitan Police and London Fire Brigade.
- A comment was noted that the authorising officer should be accountable if the review of OnBlackheath suggests it had failed and it is then allowed to go ahead again.
- A question was raised as to the cost of the rent for the event. It was noted that this had not yet been finalised as it would not have been appropriate prior to authorisation to the event progressing.
- The group were informed that 50% of the hire fee from the OnBlackheath event is made available to be spent on improvements for the Heath.

- A question was raised over the impact that the closure of Hare and Billet Road for 8 days will have in relation to the OnBlackheath festival. The group were informed that the road closure will need to go through the relevant Council transport process and Transport for London would manage issues related to public transport. The meeting was informed that the aim of the OnBlackheath organisers was to limit the time the road was closed.
- It was noted that a Transport Plan would be put in place for the OnBlackheath event that would address issues surrounding the closure of Hare and Billet Road.
- It was noted that an Events Management Plan would need to be submitted to the Council no less than 3 months before the event. In addition a local consultation event is expected to be held closer to the time of the festival.
- The meeting was informed that the Blackheath Society had previously met with the authorising officer in relation to OnBlackheath. It was also noted that provisos had since been put for OnBlackheath relating to noise levels, limiting attendance figures and putting in place a review after the event to assess the impact.
- A concern was raised by Councillor David Grant (Greenwich West) over the joint working between Lewisham and Greenwich Councils. He noted his concerns around how the planning application for OnBlackheath had been handled and the lack of consultation with Greenwich Council. He also noted that BJWP was an advisory body and that when financial pressures are applied there would be an increased pressure on Councils to override the group. However, it was noted that there seemed to be improvements in the joint working, such as the Greenwich Licensing Officers being invited to the Lewisham Events Safety Advisory Group.
- A question was raised about the stewarding of OnBlackheath and its role in addressing illegally parked cars. It was noted that stewards would be ensuring that people are not parking on the heath and working to the best of their ability to steward the area as they want to hold the event in future years.
- Councillor Geoffrey Brighty raised his concerns around the number of events taking place on the Heath and how many more are expected. It was noted that the BJWP previously agreed to not include a set number of events in the Blackheath Events Policy but would review this at the October meeting. The BJWP would also review whether they felt the deposit amount should be raised.
- Councillor Chris Maines (Blackheath) rounded up the meeting and noted that:
 - The letter from the BJWP and authorising officer relating to OnBlackheath would be circulated.
 - An invitation to the next Blackheath Ward Assembly would be extended to the authorised officer.
 - A Community consultation event would be held in the future in relation to the Good Hope Festival.