

THEMED DEBATE: SPORTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

JUNE 2011

Resident 1

I mainly play and coach football throughout Southwark. It is a positive thing for young people to be involved or participate in sports. There are so many positive outcomes that can be arrived at, such as a healthy lifestyle, breaking down barriers and creating new relationships, pursuing an interest or hobby and for the dedicated - turning sports into a career.

Southwark has some excellent sports facilities, though they are limited in number. We could always do with more.

Each community council area should have its own designated central sports facility which all young people can access and does not target any particular group.

I am concerned how local people now have the power to decide the allocation of community council funds and grants. A significant amount of local people have a lack of knowledge and are unaware of the process and development which goes towards youth engagement. I fear that this lack of insight and knowledge could hamper the development of youth programmes.

Resident 2

It's a good thing as young people relate to sports as enjoyment.

I think sports provision in Southwark is good. My favourite one is the astro turf pitch at Burgess Park. I feel safe at most of the facilities I use.

We could do with more swimming pools, including outdoor pools. And more astro-turf pitches - not only for football but for a host of different activities and multisport use.

We need more facilities & activities to keep young people averted from risks. More funding.

Resident 3

I play basketball in my local area. It's a great way to connect and come together within your community and it's also a good way to meet new people and make new friends.

I'd like to see more astro-turf pitches and cricket pitches. Young people need a variety of things to do. They need a choice.

Sport helps and brings communities together. It would also be good to have awareness or information sessions on issues such as knife crime and positive leadership roles so young people can have options in order to raise their aspirations.

Resident 4

Sport is an opportunity to have something to aim for and it keeps young people off the streets.

Facilities are generally good but some sports halls should consider having padded walls for safety when playing football.

We could do with a greater variety of sports like canoeing, and more activities that don't cost anything. Free things always bring more people in.

Don't cut funding for sports. Give us more free sessions and activities. That will draw more people in.

Resident 5

It's something to do and it keeps you occupied. You have benefits like a healthier lifestyle and the possibility of a career or job.

Facilities should also keep attracting girls to take part.

I would introduce new and different sports. I'd also like to see more variety for girls so we have options to choose from.

Less activities mean more anti social behaviour.

Resident 6

Sport fits naturally with the 'Every Child Matters' ethos. It's all about keeping fit and staying safe - healthy competition in a supervised environment. There's also the sheer enjoyment and gaining new skills.

I think we need some updating of sports facilities and sports provision generally in Southwark. The amount the council can provide is limited. The voluntary sector has more capacity but not necessarily good provision.

There's been some relaxing of bureaucracy in recent times and that's a good thing. CRB checking isn't as onerous as it used to be, but the process still thorough and there is a trail of accountability.

Looking beyond 2012 - what will be the infrastructure? I'm concerned about the sustainability of the programmes we provide, and the seasonality. We provide an important gateway for the social integration of young people and we also contribute to better health by tackling obesity.

Resident 7

For many young people, sport is a very effective cathartic release of energy that might otherwise be channelled in the wrong direction. Sport enables young people to work as a team, to get to know other young people, to have a goal and a purpose. It keeps them fit and healthy which in turn helps to keep them mentally stable. Sport ensures that young people are using their physical and mental strength to their full potential and it keeps them busy and focused.

I think there are good sports facilities in Southwark but I also think things could always be better and that if participation was greater (as it should be) there would be nowhere near enough provision to cater for everyone.

Sport for girls is of major importance and they should be targeted as early as possible. Trying to engage teenage girls in sport and is a massively difficult undertaking as sport has not been an integral part of their upbringing and culture. Two hour long PE sessions at school per week for 5 to 11 year olds is, in my opinion, nowhere near enough.

In the USA female participation in a variety of sports is as broad as it is for the men. This is due to a sporting culture that gives opportunities for participation at a much earlier age than in England.

Our councillors need to know that young people's attitudes to sport will only change through education at an early age and through greater support from adults (parents, teachers, youth workers etc). Sport at a young age must be taken seriously for young people to retain their interest into young adulthood.

Resident 8

I think that sport is a good starting point for young people. It's a very useful tool for introducing working with them around other issues.

There are some very good examples in Southwark of youth and sports provision, including Southwark Community Games. They do sessions every week at this club, but we've had some cutbacks and it's starting to affect our work.

We need to maintain the level of sports development in the borough and strengthen the relationship between sports and young people. One way to do that is to keep us better informed about things like funding opportunities.

Resident 9

This is my first time to use this place [Burgess Park outdoor gym]. I was driving by one day and I saw it and thought I'd come and try it out. It's a great community space for all age groups, races, and backgrounds. Everyone's really friendly and we're getting to know each other through working out.

If this outdoor gym didn't exist I wouldn't have come into this park. It feels very safe too and it's a good way for councils to spend money.

The only thing it needs is a drinking fountain. This is thirsty work.

Resident 10

This is a great idea – this outdoor gym. I come here two or three times a week to keep myself fit and it's free. This kind of thing makes the masses very happy.

People talk to people. They laugh, smile. I'm not working at the moment and I can't afford to go to the gym. Sometimes I sit at home and I can feel the stress levels rising in me. But I come down here for an hour and a half and it all goes away. Then I feel happier about myself and this community.

The council makes this provision and we really appreciate it. If we could have more of this kind of thing it would be better for everyone.

Resident 11

Whoever came up with this idea [outdoor gyms] in the council deserves a lot of credit. It's one of the best things the council has done for the people. It's great for young people especially because it gives them something to do.

It's good to see things like this [outdoor gym]. Good to see some effort being made to help people, especially promoting sport and fitness. But there needs to be change from the top down.

This kind of thing needs to be expanded. We need to do more for the grassroots people. They need more youth clubs as well as outdoor gyms.

We're living in a divided world and you need to ease up the pressure on the ghetto people. We deserve to be treated more fairly.

Resident 12

It's not just for kids. It's for people in general. That's what I like about it. A healthy mind keeps a healthy body and the two make for a healthy society. That means less expense for the government and the council because you'll have less people going to the doctor and more people fit for work.

Resident 13

I think the council should provide more places for young people to play, to keep them out of trouble. On the other hand young people are getting more obese and they need to do more exercise.

Burgess Park has this great outdoor gym but we need more space for children to play too.

Resident 14

There's not much to do during the school holidays, except for things that you have to pay for.

There are some swimming classes in Southwark but they're very expensive and we couldn't afford them. We're Muslim and women like me would like to take up swimming classes. We have some women only sessions but the lifeguards are often male and that means we can't go to those classes.

Resident 15

Sport is all about teaching young people the value of teamwork, motivation, discipline. It's also about having fun and getting good at something.

But that won't happen without financial input. Sport will never disappear but we'll never get as much out of it as we can without investment in resources.

Sport builds confidence in young people. It also makes them more aware of their bodies. You've got to live in it for the rest of your life and you may as well like it. One

way to find out that you like it is to play sport. You test and discover your limits. If you don't know what the limits of your body are, you don't know yourself.

Everyone is good at something. Some young people make the mistake of thinking that because they're not good at football, they're not good at sport. But in fact they might be brilliant at something else.

Playing football can be a really intense experience that you go through with five or ten other people. You might know someone for ten years and not have that intensity with them. But you play a game of football for ten minutes and you really connect with them on a completely different level to everyday life. Sport is invaluable in that sense. It really tests you and it does that in a safe environment.

When it comes to making cuts or savings it's too easy to target sport because people don't think of it in the same light as health care or education. You can live without sport but if you cut something like that long term people don't get to be the people that they can be. They don't achieve their full potential and that can have serious knock on effects. So please don't cut Southwark Community Games!

The important relationships I've had have been nurtured through sport. If I didn't have sport in my life growing up I don't believe I would have gone to university or achieved a lot of the things I have. It affects your confidence. It affects the way that you meet people or see the world.

Resident 16

I want to champion young volunteering in sport or any other arena. It's good for education purposes and getting UCAS points. It also prepares young people for the world of work by developing their skills and experience as well as teaching them teamwork.

They learn responsibility and how to be relied upon. They contribute to their local communities and get the opportunity to put something back. That in turns gives young people a huge feeling of self worth.

Councillors need to ensure that young people have lots of opportunities for getting involved in their communities. That teaches them responsibility. They learn how to run and develop things.

Whether it's sport or some other arena, young people need formal opportunities to achieve things together as part of a team, or to coach other young people in a local club. They need to get out and about and a chance to learn about structure. Young people often lack that knowledge of how to build positive things like volunteering into their week.

ISSUES RAISED AT PECKHAM AND NUNHEAD & PECKHAM RYE COMMUNITY COUNCILS THAT RELATE TO THE THEME

- Request for information on the Olympic legacy fund
- Need to upgrade the quality of football pitches in the borough
- What is the Council doing to promote sports other than football?
- Given that Camberwell Leisure Centre used to house an Olympic size swimming pool, what are the possibilities for extending the current length and installing diving facilities?

- The need to refurbish Peckham Pulse
- What is the council doing to involve young people with disabilities in sport?
- Has the council thought about transportation costs for young people accessing facilities around the borough?
- Are safety issues considered when developing new facilities for example when young people are leaving training sessions late at night?
- Question on the building of a BMX track in Burgess Park