

----- Original Message -----  
From: M BARNARD  
Sent: Thu May 29 09:54:51 2008  
Subject: Re: Young people

**OFFICERS RESPONSE TO STATEMENT FROM MR MICK BARNARD**

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE IN SOUTHWARK PLEASE READ THIS AND ACKNOWLEDGE OR COMMENT We also request that a short Scrutiny Panel looks into the provision and management of current facilities on/in Peckham Rye Common/Park.

It is unfortunate that some Council officers often perceive Southwark Caribb as the villains of the peace. The reason it might appear that way is that we have to continually confront officers for failing to communicate or co operate when our only aim is to provide a much needed service that the Prime Minister, other politicians and almost everybody including the new Mayor of London say is vital to keep youngsters off the streets.

It appears all the hard work Southwark Caribb put into securing facilities on Peckham Rye with the help of Councillors is now a millstone around our neck, we need to encourage young people to be responsible and feel valued unfortunately the attitude of some officers has the opposite affect.

**Response:**

The Parks and Open spaces service happily acknowledge that Southwark Caribb F.C. do invaluable work in providing young people with positive alternatives to crime and anti-social behaviour and we our best to support their activities. It is certainly not our intention to obstruct their activities.

Southwark Caribb are one of the dozens of sports clubs, cultural and educational voluntary sector organisations that use Parks and thus we must ensure that we have in place robust arrangements to ensure that the Council facilities are equally available to all, as the resources available to the service are inevitably constrained. These rules (a) protect the interest of all stakeholders (b) protect the Council's interests and assets and (c) reflect the extent to which the Council can act.

Most of the other clubs that we work with accept this and work within the regulatory and management frameworks that are jointly agreed or are legally defined.

However Southwark Caribb seem to regard themselves as a special case and can be reluctant to conform to the rules or to apply pressure for them to be changed when they do not suit their purposes. They also on occasions robustly challenge officers trying to discharge their responsibilities in a professional and even-handed way. This is an issue we have had to discuss with the Club.

The latest act of control regards the provision of a large storage container.

Permission was granted for a large container for storage purposes officers indicated there was no money so we suggested trying to raise the money ourselves, officers then told us the cost would include removing the small container, the cost of the large container and the cost of permission from the Council, despite agreeing to all this officers then indicated that they wanted full control and we could not even have our own key.

**Response:**

Some two years ago, officers met Southwark Caribb to discuss changing room requirements at Peckham Rye. At this meeting Southwark Caribb F.C. stated that they required three additional changing rooms and a storage container of certain dimensions. The dimensions given were incorporated into a planning application which was eventually granted. When the storage container was installed, the club indicated that it was not big enough and they would like a larger one.

A further planning application was submitted for the larger unit (with the Council carrying the cost of this application), permission for which was granted a few weeks ago. Currently the Council has no budget to install the new container or to remove the existing one and this was made clear to the club at several meetings.

The existing storage container was installed to service all of the clubs using Peckham Rye. In the past Southwark Caribb have been unwilling to share these facilities. In the light of this we have suggested that the use of the container should be regulated by as license - this would be normal practice anyway. At no point has it been suggested that Southwark Caribb could not have a key.

**Background information**

In 2006 officers submitted plans for a cafe on Peckham Rye with limited provision for changing facilities.

At this time Southwark Caribb were occupying an old P.O.W hut provided by an officer not directly responsible.

At the Planning Committee the officer presenting the application when questioned indicated although there were funds for the cafe none had been identified for the changing facility, the P.O.W hut would be demolished and there would be no provision for a temporary facility.

Fortunately the Planning Committee placed a condition on the application that temporary facilities should be provided during the lifetime of the cafe project.

Nunhead and Peckham Rye Community Council then allocated £60,000 from Cleaner Greener Safer monies towards the cost of 2 mini permanent changing rooms. It was discovered later that officers had failed to allocate the money so there was now a short fall. (which a year later was funded by several Community Council's sympathetic to our plight)

At the time and before the shortfall was discovered Local Councillors identified an additional £65,000 from section 106 monies from two large developments less than 100 yards from the proposed cafe site. Question why had officers not considered this.

Response:

This misrepresents the facts. At the point when the brief for the new Peckham Rye café was issued for tender to architects, officers identified the aspiration to provide some changing facilities because none were available on the Rye at the time. No funding had been identified to allow for the construction of this element but officers commissioned the architects to design in a changing room element at risk and set about finding the money. Officers submitted a CGS bid which Peckham and Nunhead CC agreed. In addition officers secured funding from two s106 agreements.

Just a few months after spending £20,000 on the P.O.W hut officers indicated that it was unsafe and had to be demolished but they would not provide any replacement facilities.

Response:

The POW hut on Peckham Rye that Southwark Caribb had been using had to be demolished to make way for the new café. The Parks service fitted out one of the remaining huts at a cost of approximately £15,000 for Caribb to use. The club had exclusive use of this building rent and utility-cost free for some months. A subsequent visual inspection of the building some months later revealed recent serious cracking to the external fabric and the view of a consultant structural engineer was that it was unsound. Reluctantly Southwark Caribb had to be advised that they could not use the building for safety reasons.

In February 2007 Southwark Caribb attended Council Assembly and presented a deputation however officers attempted to discredit our representatives but we got wind of their plans and were able to impress the Councillors so much they agreed to fund some temporary facilities.

At no stage did officers consult about what facilities were required so we ended up with a less than satisfactory facility.

Despite having occupied the P.O.W hut for over 2 years without incident officers insisted all control of the new facilities remain with them.

This meant contacting their on site representative not only to open the facility upon arrival but to lock and open it each time any of our players needed access during a match or training.

Their on site representative when complaining reported back that she opened and closed the facility 20 times between 9am and 4pm on one day but forgot to mention there were 12 teams plus referees and a choice of 18 doors, at times we waited up to half an hour, while she looked after her customers in the cafe.

Recently we had a cup game booked for Peckham Rye but due to bad weather it was cancelled and we had to play at Purley however we were initially refused use of the changing rooms, because the pitch was unplayable and they were link through the booking process, this despite the fact they would remain empty. It took some persuasion before they relented. But the rule now is they will remain empty for away games and training days.

**Response:**

A number of meetings were held with users to discuss the use and design of the temporary facilities, including one attended by lead members on 14 May 2006. Other users have been extremely complimentary of the facilities. There is very little flexibility in the design of units of this nature but officers did base the layout of the commissioned structures on a design that was developed for Southwark Caribb by the manufacturers, Extraspace.

The arrangements that are put in place at Peckham Rye are driven by two factors -

1) Cost. The Council does not have the resources to staff these facilities so we have tied their management in to our contract with the cafe licensee. The café is open 7 days/week every week of the year and is ideally placed to open and close these facilities, clean them and monitor their use. The Council pays the licensee for operating this service for us.

2) Access to all. The changing facilities at Peckham Rye are for the use of all clubs using pitches there. The principle that has operated hitherto is that use of the changing rooms is linked to a pitch booking (this is the rule that applies to other changing facilities elsewhere in the Borough). We do not (and indeed it would be practically and financially impossible for us to) offer clubs the use of our changing rooms when their away fixtures do not offer changing facilities. No other club has ever made a request of this nature.

However, we are looking to put in place an arrangement whereby changing rooms are made available for away games as long as this did not stretch the capacity of our licensee to run her business. If we are able to do this, it would be unique in our experience whereby public park facilities are made available to a club playing outside the borough. Nevertheless the fact that we are seeking to put such arrangements in place should be seen as a testament to the degree that the service will go to support the club.

Every year we have problems completing our matches on time due to bad weather throughout the season, we then have to try and negotiate an extension but officers never give us the full requirement but this year due to an officers embarrassing and unnecessary intervention in an email exchange between our representative and the on site representative we were able to complete our fixtures. We even thanked all the officers concerned thinking a little praise might help build bridges, unfortunately it did not work.

**Response:**

At the meeting held with clubs on 14 May 2006 it was agreed that the playing season on the pitches on the Rye would be limited to 8 months i.e. Sept - April. The pitches at Peckham Rye are not in the best possible condition and we need time to repair them at season's end and for them to recover. The more they are used, the more cancellations are made to fixtures and the longer the extension to the season. This is a vicious circle.

We booked a contractor to commence pitch repairs in the second week of May, 6 weeks after the end of the formal season. Southwark Caribb asked for an extension to the following week which we were eventually able to grant by postponing the pitch repair process. As a result, the pitches will have shorter amount of time to recover. This situation is exacerbated by Southwark Caribb's use of pitches in August to hold its 'Summer festival.'

Just last weekend 24th May we met at Peckham Rye for a training session only to be informed on our arrival that the officer referred to above had sent an email to the on site representative instructing them not to open the facilities, thus leaving us with dozens of youngsters with no equipment. Fortunately a visiting Councillor after a heated discussion with the on site representative managed to gain access. There was no attempt to contact us or any other user group and inform us of the new instruction, however weeks previous the same officer managed to contact all users to remove their equipment with only a few days notice, but that's another story.

**Response:**

Southwark Caribb had not made any booking for this training session or advised us that it was going to take place. As far as we were concerned, the football season has finished mid-May (as Caribb had advised us).

We do not currently book 'training sessions' and do not have a tariff for this. No other club has ever requested the use of changing rooms for 'training sessions.' The club simply turned up and demanded the changing rooms to be made available when they were fully aware of how the Council manages this facility.

The Council's licensee felt that she had been 'intimidated' into opening the facility and we will have to carry the cost of cleaning it after the club had used it.

However we have indicated that we would be willing to allow Caribb to use the changing facilities for training sessions as long as these are booked and paid for in advance.

These are just a few examples in a whole catalogue.

footnote: there is one Council officer not directly responsible but who has done his best to assist us and other users where possible Garry Martin.