

# **Access to Sports Facilities in Peckham Rye Park**

Report of the Scrutiny Support Sub-Committee A

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## **1 Introduction**

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee prioritized this topic for review as members were aware of protracted problems discussed in a number of council meetings.

Southwark Caribb, a local football club, had been raising issues about the quality and availability of the facilities. Members of the Scrutiny sub-committee held two meetings (01.07.2008 & 16.09.2008) to hear from the Southwark Caribb and other groups affected by the provision and management of the sports facilities in Peckham Rye Park.

The sub-committee felt from the outset that a clear strategy is required for Peckham Rye Park in the borough with a view for short, medium and long term future, and hope that this might go on to inform management of other sporting facilities in the borough.

## **2 The situation in Peckham Rye Park**

As is inevitable in inner city areas with pressurized public facilities, there is a greater demand for football facilities than the park is easily able to meet. The sub-committee heard from groups who were unhappy with the current arrangements, other groups who were satisfied, and the officer who manages the park and its resources.

## **3 Southwark Caribb's perspective**

Southwark Caribb Youth Football Club is a large expanding club which was formed in 1999, training teams of local boys & girls (250 children as members), from under 8 year olds to under 18 year olds, two days a week and at the weekends play matches in the Tandridge league/cup/trophy.

The park currently has 2 senior pitches, 1 junior pitch and 2 small sided pitches available mornings and afternoons, that is a total of 136 players from the home teams alone who will want to use the changing rooms if all pitches are in use.

The sub-committee were informed that the football clubs always booked pitches in advance but more fixtures were usually needed, due to postponed matches which was usually down to poor weather and drainage in certain parts of the park, they felt the council should be expending its support for facilities such as this, aimed at young people.

The opinion of Caribb FC was that the present facilities could not accommodate 22 people and was certainly not a state of art facility. They felt that no one was ever consulted about the size or any other requirements user might need. More and improved pitches were required.

Changing facilities need to be paid for by the users and should be placed close to the pitches. Football is played right throughout the year and the changing rooms should serve the users.

Caribb FC also felt that the changing rooms were wrong for the age groups using them. The present storage container is 20 foot long but there is great need for a larger container of perhaps 40 foot long. Storage for equipment

does vary depending on the age groups and the equipment used can be very heavy. All users needed to be involved and facilities should be for all, access needs to be addressed and people should be responsible. The boys need to feel that they are trusted and wanted.

Proper changing rooms and shower facilities are required and any further proposals should be consulted with users groups, the storage of equipment also needs to be considered in Peckham Rye Park,

The matters for consideration were as follows:-

- Management of the temporary changing facilities
- Where necessary pitches to be upgraded
- Storage container (permission granted no container provided)
- Disused toilets (as shared office space + multi use area)
- Priority use of pitches for current users
- Extend season to the end of May each year
- Casual players/circus/funfair.

The park users wanted to find out what policies the borough had in place and how the Council could improve the service within existing funds.

#### **4 Other user groups perspective**

The representative of the Dulwich Harps Gaelic Football Club felt that overall the facilities are excellent. The changing rooms have been redecorated. It would be great if everyone had a key to the changing rooms. The council could guarantee a 4 year deal where teams could store their equipment and make clubs responsible for their own kits and balls.

He added that they can get 15 players into the changing room and the away teams were also very happy with the facilities.

A serving police officer reported to the sub-committee that it was important to reduce crime on the streets, and positive programmes for young people were needed and could prove to be beneficial and fruitful to the community. He continued by stating that there were many positive role models involved in Southwark Caribb and he fully supported them.

Mick Barnard informed the sub-committee that football clubs give these young people the opportunity to be part of a team who are supported by the club and coaches. The club was developing groups from under 7s to under 18s which is quite a wide band of youths.

The ground needs to be updated and there was a strong feeling that fairs and circuses need to be placed to another part of park due to the wear and tear on the park.

The Sub-Committee heard from the following groups:

1. Southwark Caribb Football Club
2. Harps Gaelic Football Club
3. Local residents

4. Café on the Rye (Manager)
5. Schools Sports Partnership
6. Friends of Peckham Rye Park
7. St John Bosco Football Club
8. Southwark Libraries Football Club
9. Metropolitan Police

## 5 Officers perspective

The Head of Public Realm represented the parks service and welcomed the opportunity to engage with many of the park users and to make sure there was a sustainable future with ground rules which can be adhered. He said that the park is well used and has been awarded a 3<sup>rd</sup> green flag and is an asset valued by the community. Other authorities have said it has the best facilities in the country, but he accepted that investment is required for the park changing room facilities and the storage container.

As there is no extra budget this year for any more investment work, it was thought sensible to look at working within existing resources to help inform improvement plans.

Council officers reported that Southwark Council Sports Facilities (terms and conditions of use is attached as appendix A.

## 6 Summary

The sub-committee felt that the points raised during both meetings and highlighted below reflected that there were a number of youths who were involved with clubs and other sporting activities and should be encouraged and supported by the Council to pursue healthy and positive activities.

The chair visited Peckham Rye Park on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2008, where he was shown around the storage facility, changing rooms and pitches. The park was very busy and a lot of teams were playing their games. He was also informed that a junior team had to play their game at another park because there were not enough pitches marked out for that day, although they had been booked.

The Chair felt that the changing rooms were not big enough for the number of people using them and that the storage container was not big enough for the amount of equipment that was stored in it. It was also felt that junior teams should not have travel to play home games. The number of pitches required should be marked out and available to use for teams.

During the scrutiny process the issue regarding the keys to changing rooms has been resolved.

On the visit to Peckham Rye Park the chair was impressed with the efficiency and service provided by the management of the cafe.

The following points were raised during both meetings of the sub-committee:

- pitch numbers and allocations
- size and numbers of changing rooms
- storage facilities

- mix of activities
- park maps.

## **7 Recommendations – Peckham Rye Park (Provision and Management of the Sports Facilities).**

- 1. Management to control booking allocations, with a clear procedure of pitch usage.**
  - a. That management of the pitches and facilities on Saturday and Sunday is required to supervise and assist user groups on these days.**
  - b. That officers look at the pitch allocations and consider the possibility of extending pitch availability at the rear of the park by 2 extra pitches and use pitches at the front of the park for casual users, but giving priority to sporting activities.**
- 2. Best use of Peckham Rye facilities**
  - a. That officers review the range of sports that could take place at the park and include user groups.**
  - b. That officers look at the possibility of extending pitches and increased facilities as the demand for sporting activity increases, which fits in with health and youth provision aspects.**
  - c. A management user group should be established which will have equal representation of all user groups including park management reporting directly with the council. Perhaps this can be a template for all parks in future.**
- 3. The need for a full feasibility study**
  - a. A full review of changing rooms and storage container is required as the present facilities do not meet the needs of the present users.**
  - b. The picnic area in the Park could also do with some development as it is a beautiful relaxing area which can be used by all park users.**
  - c. There is a need to update notice boards and maps in the park.**
  - d. That the feasibility study be released and used for basic sporting activities in all parks.**
- 4. That officers be requested to provide information on the proposed football centre to all parks officers for their information.**