

# **Time for Change Burgess Park**

Report of Scrutiny Sub-Committee A

September 2009



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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Overview & Scrutiny Committee prioritized this topic for review as members were aware of protracted problems discussed in a number of council meetings.
- 1.2 Scrutiny sub-committee A discussed issues regarding Burgess Park at five meetings (October 20 and December 2 2008, January 21, March 18 and April 22 2009) and heard from Friends of Burgess Park and information regarding crimes being committed in the area of the park.
- 1.3 The sub-committee felt from the outset that a clear strategy is required for Burgess Park 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.
- 1.4 Members considered how the park should look, how to maximize the benefit to the community in the future and how this could be funded/supported.
- 1.5 It also reviewed the current status of plans for improvements to the park, in light of the suspension of the Burgess Park Development Trust initiative; to review how the future of the park should fit with the regeneration of surrounding residential areas.
- 1.6 Burgess Park provides essential facilities to about 70,000 people living in the immediate vicinity. For many residents, this is the only accessible, local, quality green space. It offers a unique opportunity to fuel surrounding regeneration projects and help some of the most deprived areas in London.
- 1.7 At 50 hectares Burgess Park is the same size as St James's Park but has remained an incomplete and undervalued space for the past 50 years. As a result the park, although much loved by local residents, has not realised its full potential.

## 2 **The situation in Burgess Park**

- 2.1 As is inevitable in inner city areas with pressurized public facilities, there is a greater demand for sporting facilities than the park is able to meet. The sub-committee had been informed that the Aylesbury estate was due for demolition but would be replaced with private and public sector housing, which would mean a tariff would be made available to the park of £20 million over a 15 year period.
- 2.2 Burgess Park is set to get a £6 million boost, after scooping a £2 million prize awarded by the Mayor of London. Added to this will be the £4 million of match-funding secured from partnership between the council and the New Deal for Communities, to make the total value of improvements £6 million.
- 2.3 The sub-committee discussed the redevelopment of the Aylesbury estate and the fact that there would be three paths leading from the new build to the park, and were looking for connectivity to all communities.
- 2.4 Members discussed management of the park and agreed that all successful parks provide an experience that the park is cherished by those that have

responsibility for its management and maintenance. This in turn contributes to the feeling of security from members of the community, it was also felt that park rangers were required for all the parks in this borough.

- 2.5 The sub-committee discussed the demolition of existing roads and paths which were required to create an individual park identity; it would be essential to remove much of the remains of the past. The remnants of second world war bombing and site clearance trigger a feeling of decay. It was felt that these old roads and paths should be removed.

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

- 3.1 Now that funding is available a master plan was required for the park, where different attractions can be fitted properly in the park. The following points were raised by the sub-committee:-

- Landscaping of the park (as there are beautiful areas in the park)
- Providing an identity of the park
- Enhancing wildlife in the park
- Looking at the north end part of the park
- Looking at the gap in the park
- Walworth road tennis club
- The park appears to be disjointed and needs to be more flowing
- Cycling track
- Lake
- Map of Burgess Park.

- 3.2 The sub-committee was aware that people felt vulnerable and that proper lighting would be required for the park and entrances to the park needed to be made safe. Bike riding and skating ramps needed to be made exciting for users. The tennis courts required funding of £50,000 to £100,000, to bring it up to standard, it was also noted that this service was very well used all year round.

- 3.3 A persistent problem of robbery in the park continued, usually peaking during the summer months. The police and community wardens regularly patrolled the park and in addition had weekly meetings to review robbery reports and respond to emerging hotspot areas by increasing the number of high visibility patrols.

- 3.4 Members were made aware that there was a fear of crime in and around the park and that police presence was required in the park; there was a perception that the park was a dangerous place at night. It was suggested that the whole of the park requires improved lighting.

- 3.5 There have been planned proactive operations, for example the police have been undertaking a number of patrols in recent weeks by the cycle squad. This has been very successful and robbery has fallen in the park on a weekly basis.

- 3.6 The following points were highlighted in connection to safety in the park:

- Lighting required for cycling routes
- CCTV should be placed at entrances to the park

- 3.7 In response to points raised regarding the design and plans, members were informed that this would be undertaken by consultants with a development brief as well as considering the principles and connectivity of the whole plan.
- 3.8 Members felt strongly that a list of projects should be drawn up and that these could be addressed when funding has been made available. There were areas such as the de-naturalising of the lake, which would require funding to deal with rubbish dumping as well as monitoring and maintaining the area. Members were interested in whether sailing may be permitted on the lake.
- 3.9 Members agreed that a recommendation should be to clean the lake regularly making sure no rubbish is left to build up. Another recommendation should also be a tree planting scheme which should be included in any discussion with designers.
- 3.10 Members pointed out that leisure aspects of the park had been covered comprehensively in the report but no real mention of sports. Members agreed that a strong identity for the park will attract not only local and city visitors but national and international visitors. In a large park this guarantees more users making it sustainable and safer and can profoundly change the quality of life in its surrounding areas.
- 3.11 The chair highlighted identity nodes like Kew and Pac de la Villette. The use of strong identity nodes would fulfill a range of functions:
- Endow Burgess Park with immediate points of interest and drama as a destination park
  - Improve welcoming and way-finding for all
  - Accommodate amenities in the park; shops, cafes, information points, play facilities, workshops, meeting places, galleries, art workshops
  - Provide historical and cultural reference to buildings or functions of interest from the area
  - Each node would also be a point of sustainable power generation for the park
- 3.12 Members discussed management of the park and agreed that all successful parks provide an experience that the park is cherished by those that have responsibility for its management and maintenance. This in turn contributes to the feeling of security they feel, members also felt that park rangers were required for all the parks in this borough.
- 3.13 The sub-committee expressed concern with regards to parts of the park being excluded (the cricket pitch), and wished to know what will happen to these areas of the park along with the connectivity with different parts of the borough i.e. moving away from North and East Peckham and drawing towards the Aylesbury estate.
- 3.14 It was felt by the sub-committee that sculptors like to show a story and it would be interesting if the history of the borough could somehow be recorded and displayed in the park, which could turn out to be an attraction of the park.
- 3.15 Funding should also be used for creating a setting for arts and organised sports were to be encouraged such as rugby, cricket, football and tennis.

Quick remedies were required for the park by the summer and consultation should be carried out with stakeholders to get the plans together.

- 3.16 The nature area in the park needs a great deal of attention and management, members wanted a park for the 21<sup>st</sup> century with attractions such as statues and sculptures (which could be made of steel and stone). These could be placed around the nodes in the park, and should act as an attraction to the diverse community in the borough.
- 3.17 Sculptures could show a story reflecting the history and diversity of the borough and could include a statement of the slave trade. There are many artists in this borough and this could prove to be successful project for them and/or art students attending local colleges.

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

- 4.1 The sub-committee was informed that the play area in the park had been removed and that this had been a very well used large area which had been left to become derelict. A representative from Friends of Burgess Park (FOBP) reported that the new Chumleigh Gardens Cafe would have a new play area for children as well as internet access.
- 4.2 A representative of the Friends of Burgess Park reported that sports activities needed to be prioritised, structured and organised, presently there were limited toilets and changing facilities to service cricket, football and tennis users of the park. It would also be an attraction if fishing were available from the lake, officers could investigate this option.

#### **5 Officers' perspective**

- 5.1 Members discussed the structure of the park and expressed interest in including attractions such as park sculptures which could be made from stone and steel and could be placed around the nodes highlighted in the report.
- 5.2 The council was now looking to make the most of this opportunity, and has appointed a project manager who is a qualified landscape architect and experienced project manager for the park who will oversee the project.
- 5.3 The two million pounds from the Mayor and the extra four million pounds from the Aylesbury New Deals for Communities will make a huge difference to Burgess Park. There will be a need to make sure over the next few months that this project is planned carefully, and work out the best plan for Burgess Park's future and also to get the local community involved where possible.
- 5.4 Members were informed of the following financial information:
- The cost of delivering a complete park is in excess of £15m
  - Our scheme will deliver the structure of a successful park for £6M
  - The re-development of the Aylesbury Estate will deliver the further funding required to complete the park over the next 15 years.
- 5.5 Conclusion:

- This project will support the process of change that will benefit the whole community
- The Burgess Park project is an integral part of the regeneration process in South Central London
- This project will transform the perception and use of Burgess Park.

5.6 The officer reported the following points to members:

- there is a need to spend the funding on the park within 3 years
- Chumleigh Gardens – £1 million scheme (community funding). Starting May-September 2009 (already obtained separate funding)
- William 4<sup>th</sup> Pub is owned by the Aylesbury DC and will be reopened for youth facilities
- The Old Library and Lyn Boxing Club (Blank wall be opened up in the park)

## 6 Summary

6.1 It was also felt that consideration of the historical and cultural heritage of the parks past in a number of proposed identity nodes as a positive celebration of the local history and contribution by members.

6.2 The five key elements are as follows:

1. Demolition of existing roads and paths: creation of a sequence of legible spaces
2. Strengthening the boundaries of the park: creating a viable park
3. Providing local people with access to nature and developing habitat
4. Unifying structure: creating a unique identity
5. Inviting entrances, legible circulation and clearly defined boundaries

## 7 Recommendations – Burgess Park

### The Park

1. The sub-committee supports the plan and bid with the priorities contained within the report “Time for Change” (copy available from Scrutiny Team) and accepts the focus on art, but considering all the information in full feels there is a need to also emphasis sports. It was felt that the history of the local area should be reflected in art form contained in the park. Unique art should be featured in the park but not to the detriment of the development of the park.
2. The sub-committee agreed that sports activities need to be prioritised, structured and organised, presently there were limited toilets and changing facilities to service cricket, football and tennis users of the park. It would also be an attraction if boating were available from the lake, officers to investigate this option.
3. The sub-committee agreed that a tree planting scheme should be included in any discussion with designers.
4. The sub-committee agreed that removal of rubbish and proper maintenance of the lake could possibly allow water sports such as canoeing and boating.

Officers would need to discuss with people who fish in the lake and consider health & safety issues with water sport.

5. The sub-committee agreed an action plan required for works with priorities and considering public safety and that Friends of Burgess Park report should also be considered by the project team.
6. The sub-committee felt that a dedicated park warden/ranger is required for all major parks in this borough.
7. The sub-committee agreed that the cycle route be provided with proper lighting in areas of concern and that LED lighting be used, (lighting of trees) this needs to be done as a priority due to community safety fears.
8. The sub-committee agreed that a play area is required near to the picnic area situated at the Old Kent Road entrance to the park for younger children and generally more play areas for under 5's within the park.
9. The sub-committee undertook to review progress with Burgess Park and Chumleigh Gardens at the end of September/October 2009.
10. That officers meet with stakeholder groups with a possibility of extended use of park during the weekends and to plan for any management issues that may occur during the weekends.

#### Sports in the Park

11. The sub-committee agreed a management stakeholder group should be established which will have equal representation of all user groups including park management and Friends of Burgess Park reporting directly with the council. Perhaps this can be a template for all parks in future.
12. The sub-committee agreed the management structure and groups required for organised sports events require appropriate supervision and support.
13. The sub-committee agreed that management are to control and monitor booking allocations with a clear procedure of pitch usage and management of the pitches and facilities on Saturday and Sunday which requires supervisors to assist user groups on these days.
14. The sub-committee agreed a full review of changing facilities/toilets and storage container for sports equipment is required as the present facilities do not meet the needs of the present stakeholders.
15. The sub-committee agreed to consider extending and future sports usage especially key Southwark games priority sports such as football, rugby, cricket and tennis, officers to review the range of sports that could take place at the park including stakeholder groups' representatives.
16. The sub-committee agreed 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.



17. The sub-committee agreed that officers look at the pitch allocations and consider the possibility of extending pitch availability to the best locations in the park for casual users, giving priority to sporting activities. Management of weekend activities to be undertaken by park officers/staff.
18. The sub-committee request that the above recommendations are fed into the Burgess Park Redevelopment Plan in conjunction with project manager for Burgess Park.