

QUEEN'S PARK COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Extraordinary Meeting** of the **Community Council** held in
Queen's Park Gardens, Ilbert Street, London W10 4JQ
on **Monday 23 March 2020** commencing at 18:00.

Present: Councillors Gill Fitzhugh (Chair), John McArdle, Leslie Barson, Ray Lancashire, Orrel Lawrence, Emma Sweeney, and Susanna Rustin.

Also present: six members of the public.

The meeting commenced at 18:00, with all present maintaining appropriate social distancing.

156-19/20 Apologies for absence Cllrs Brian Nicholas, and Eartha Pond.

157-19/20 Declarations of interest – Cllr McArdle declared an interest as Proper Officer and Responsible Finance Officer.

158-19/20 Public session – A member of the public noted that, during the Coronavirus pandemic, other meetings were happening virtually and asked if the Council had considered this. Cllr McArdle said that local government regulations presently did not allow such arrangements but emergency legislation may change this, and if so, the Council would consider this in future.

Queens Park Gardens. Another member of the public reported that lots of dogs were using the Gardens and queried whether a temporary partition could be obtained to separate them. Cllr Rustin welcomed this suggestion and said it would be put to the Open Spaces Committee. It was noted in discussion that Hammersmith & Fulham Parks had already closed and that Westminster's may in the future.

It was suggested that the Council's next electronic e-mail for residents include details of who to contact locally who can offer advice on dog behaviour.

Local activities to support the community during the COVID 19 pandemic. A member of the public reported that the QPG Hub and the Avenues Youth Club were involved in providing food to children who were not at school. The Hub had provided breakfast that morning, and the Avenues would provide lunch the next day. Children from Queens Park Primary, St Luke's, and Wilberforce Primary were accessing lunch at the Avenues.

Cllr McArdle noted the need for local organisations to work together and to create a network which could allocate volunteers to areas of greatest need.

Cllr Sweeney described what was happening at the Paddington Development Trust. Staff were manning a telephone helpline. She felt this was vital to reach out to the digitally excluded as most official advice was coming via the internet, but some people still relied on telephone. She expressed concern that QPCC were behind neighbouring areas in their activities.

It was agreed that Cllr Sweeney would set up a meeting to try to co-ordinate what was happening locally and to discuss how to signpost people to sources of advice, possibly via a note listing emergency telephone numbers. Cllr McArdle noted that the next edition of the Queens Park Voice was about to be delivered and another delivery could be arranged if it was agreed to produce a special note.

A member of the public noted an increase in “scamming” activity with people trying to profiteer from the crisis, and asked that the Council include a warning about this on its website.

159-19/20 Emergency Delegation and Arrangements – Councillors had received a report recommending temporarily modifying the Scheme of Delegations, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders during the COVID 19 pandemic. The report recommended that there be an extension of delegated powers to the Proper Officer.

There was a question about what happens if the Proper Officer becomes unable to carry out these duties. Cllr McArdle said there always needed to be a nominated Proper Officer in post, so another person would need to be appointed. The Council already had contingency arrangements for bank signatories. The Council was also recruiting staff at the present time.

There was a discussion about the potential conflict of interest in an individual being both a Councillor and a member of Council staff. Cllr McArdle said it was very unusual, but not prohibited. It was allowable for a temporary period whilst staff were recruited. He noted that decisions would be taken in consultation with other Councillors.

It was questioned why this meeting was taking place in person while other organisations were holding virtual meetings. Cllr McArdle said that legislation was expected which would allow local government to hold virtual meetings, but this was not yet in place. Advice was that it was unlikely they would have been challenged if the meeting has been convened virtually, but there was a risk. Given the Council’s proceedings have been the subject of local scrutiny, it was felt best exceptionally to hold this meeting in the park as no suitable premises were available which would have allowed the Government’s recommended social distancing guidelines to be followed. It was noted that four councillors were needed to be quorate so the meeting was properly convened in that respect.

The meeting concluded with a reminder that at 8pm on Thursday there was a movement to hold a mass public applause for members of the NHS.