

CLISSOLD PARK USER GROUP

NEWSLETTER AND MINUTES OF MEETINGS

EVERYONE WHO USES CLISSOLD PARK IS PART OF THE USER GROUP – EVERYONE IS WELCOME.

For this newsletter by email, contact cpug@gew.clara.co.uk

February 2004

Next meeting, Saturday March 6th Clissold Park House at 11.00 am in the Red Room, crèche provided.

All meetings are open, public meetings, anyone can attend and active participation from park users is always needed and very welcome.

NEWS: Police report back after 5th December stabbing; review of Parks ranger service called for by April 17th. Paddling Pool WILL OPEN this year... Summer activities for children – can you put some time into helping organise? Let us know. See the website for further details www.clissoldpark.com and come to the open and public meetings to contribute your views and thoughts about our Park – future dates: March 6th; April 17th; May 30th (every 6 weeks) Saturdays, 11.00 Clissold Park Café, crèche provided.

Minutes of the meeting held on Saturday 24th January 2004

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Present: Ken Worpole (Chair); Penny Crick (secretary); John Hudson (vice chair) Jim Blinks (Clissold Park); Mark White (Stoke Newington Parks Manager); Ayhan Aksu; Lorraine Worpole; Yvonne Hill; Caroline Miller; Sylvia Anderson; Cllr. Kevin Moorhouse; Betty Manning; Cllr Sills; Inspector David Rock (police); Ann McGinley; Chris Freudenberg; Helen Austen; Lyn Franklin; Lynette Gill; Daphney Kemp; Camilla Loewe; Ned Hardie-Bogs; Balavant Barber (Rangers Manager); Simon Lissner; Jen Barton

Apologies: Chit Chong; Lucy Sommers; Cllr Aussenberg; Cllr Tessler; Barbara McFarlane; Don Giddings; Hettie Sears

The main item for discussion today was **Safety and Security in the Park**, in the wake of the stabbing in December. Police Inspector David Rock and the head of the Rangers Service Balavant Barber were specifically invited to attend the meeting to report back on that event and to discuss with Park users issues and concerns arising. Ken Worpole introduced the discussion, though only after a significant number of users had asked that a journalist from the Hackney Gazette be asked to leave. While this was very difficult to resolve, it became inevitable after Hackney Council staff attending said that they would find it difficult to speak freely as they are advised not to speak to the press without going through their press office. Given that the whole point of the meeting was to have a full and frank discussion of safety and security issues, with an important council and police presence, the journalist was asked to leave.

Inspector Rock then talked about the stabbing, the investigation and the final outcome now, that is, the arrest of a 15 year old boy. The police no longer have any reason to link the incident in Clissold Park with the fatal stabbing of a woman in Victoria Park and from

their point of view the level of "threat" to the public in Clissold Park is back to normal status. Inspector Rock went on to describe routine police presence in the Park which is not regular and not very strong; however, Paul Peterson is a police officer based permanently at Stoke Newington School and he comes to the park when he can and when it is relevant. The locality beat officer John Coxon (020 7275 3117) covers a large area including the Park and comes when he can. The beat officer for Brownswood also tries to come through the Park. More community support officers would be welcomed by local police in this area, but those that are available to Stoke Newington police are taken up by duties in higher crime areas. After the stabbing, there was a "reassurance" scheme in place after the park reopened during which over 300 panic alarms were given out, along with advice and supported jogging sessions. Do we need more panic alarms? If so, let the user group know and we will pass on the request to the police. There is no formal liaison between the Police and the Park Rangers.

People then asked several questions about the incident and the Park – were Park gates open? How did the people involved get into the park (the incident took place some 45 minutes after official park closing time)? Park gates had been locked at and around closing time. The point was raised, however, that in general, the task of locking up (7 gates) and making sure that the Park is empty of people is impossible: people often refuse to leave the Park and even threaten the Rangers sometimes.

John Hudson made the point that what is at question here really are fundamental issues of the management and security of the Park. We know that individual

rangers are great and do what they can but we also know that there has been no response to our concerns and complaints about the overall ranger service over the years. A number of issues were raised and discussed: why is it that at weekends when there is highest use of the Park, it is generally inexperienced, temporary or locum rangers on duty? What are the responsibilities and duties of the rangers? Do they patrol regularly and is this made known to people? Are they distinguishable from other green uniformed Hackney park staff? To whom are they responsible? What support do they have in case of emergency? Are they equipped appropriately with mobile phones, bicycles? Is provision made to increase the numbers of rangers in school holidays and other times of high usage of the Park? Is the incident book used by Rangers and management to assess the level and nature of problems so that appropriate practices can be introduced?

Balavant Barber, Head of the Rangers service told us that a full review of the service is going on at the moment and that he would ensure that these points are covered. He acknowledged that the weekend service is weak and that no one is happy about it; he is going to look specifically at the incident book and take responsibility for ensuring adequate responses are made. Balavant is willing to receive calls and comments from anyone with a query or point about the rangers service and in case of emergency.

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The status of the public in the park after Park closing time was also discussed. If the gates have been locked and the rangers gone, are the public who chose to be in the Park responsible for themselves? Should Parks management put in lighting and other measures to protect the public outside opening hours? Or should the Park actually be left open, officially, at all times and with what implications? Might non-return turnstile gates be put in so that people can get out if they are still in the Park after other gates are locked? Or does this imply that it is OK to stay in the Park – what duty of care has Hackney to the public in that case?

It was agreed that liaison between police and rangers service is absolutely essential, both at the management and the day to day level.

Action: Ken to request from Hackney a long term, management plan for the Park that will cover the points that have come up about the Rangers Service and safety and security in the Park. This will be brought back to this meeting on 18th April and these issues will also be raised by Cllr. Sills at the Stoke Newington Forum on 17th March (Halkavi Centre 7.30).

Children's facilities in the Park

Paddling pool – Mark White reported that the paddling pool will open this summer; he is getting quotes from companies now for a refurbishment. The revenue costs for keeping the pool open have been secured and the capital needed will come from the council together with local charity Stoke Newington First and another local businessman. Cllr Moorhouse was not so sure that the revenue was secure and urged Mark to make sure that he has this in writing!

Ken Worpole reported the Hackney Parks Forum meeting he had recently attended were told that Neighbourhood Renewal Funds were available but that applications had to be in within four days. He rushed in applications for money for improvements to the paddling pool and one

o'clock club only to find that the applications had closed a day earlier than he had been told. (*Why is it made so extremely difficult to apply to these funds??? We constantly hear of money pouring into Hackney that has to be applied for within a day or two of the information being made available.*)

Summer Activities

The user group is keen to organise another programme of summer activities for children in the Park this year – both in the holidays and also at other times, weekends, half terms. We can make applications for grants from various organisations and arrange the programme, but we need to have others involved in the planning and work. **LET US KNOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GIVE SOME TIME TO THIS WORTHWHILE WORK.** We will contact parents who gave their details last year and we also need to get in touch now with relevant organisations in surrounding areas. Mark has had the bowling green area re-fenced on one side and ground staff will see what can be done about the central grassed area.

Action: Mark/Jim

Animal enclosure

In response to a question, Mark and Jim reassured us that the animal enclosure is completely safe from closure and indeed will be expanded to include an interactive area where children will be able to see the rabbits and other small animals close up.

Thames Water – the fencing around the works in the park will remain in place until a couple of weeks after the area has been re-turfed, so probably it will be removed by about mid-March.

Carols in the Park over 150 people joined to walk around the Park and sing Christmas carols on 21st December to help us to reclaim the Park as a place of pleasure and community. Many have been inspired by the atmosphere created to suggest that carol singing in the Park could be an annual event...

Café – Strong praise was expressed for the café, particularly its child friendliness.

Lottery Bid – no news after three months ... no news is ?? bad news??

Opening times of the Park – it was pointed out that the Park was not unlocked at the advertised time on recent mornings. Balavant said he would look into this.

Next meeting is on **Saturday 6th March at 11.00am**
Disabled access can be arranged – café staff will provide assistance to anyone wishing to get to the Red Room. Creche is also available in adjoining room for anyone attending the meeting. Further meetings will be on Saturdays 17th April, 29th May, 10th July, 21st August. Your active participation will be welcome.
www.clissoldpark.com or cpug@gew.clara.com or CPUG, c/o Rangers Office, Clissold Park House