

LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

MINUTES OF THE KING GEORGE'S FIELD CHARITY BOARD

HELD AT TIME NOT SPECIFIED ON WEDNESDAY, 4 APRIL 2012

**ROOM M71, TOWN HALL, MULBERRY PLACE, 5 CLOVE CRESCENT, LONDON,
E14 2BG**

Members Present:

Mayor Lutfur Rahman (Chair)

Councillor Rofique U Ahmed
Councillor Abdul Asad
Councillor Alibor Choudhury

Officers Present:

Paul Greeno – The Senior Advocate
Gavin Dooley – The Head of Enforcement and Support
Intervention
Evelyn Akoto – Democratic Services

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors,

Ohid Ahmed
Shafiqul Haque
Shahed Ali
Rabina Khan
Rania Khan
Oliur Rahman

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none

3. TRESPASSERS CAMPING IN MILE END PARK

Paul Greeno, the Senior Advocate, stated that an extraordinary meeting was called because the Council had been made aware that trespassers had commenced camping in Mile End Park, near to Hamlets Way. The Board's permission is therefore required before any action to take possession proceedings can be taken.

Gavin Dooley, The Head of Enforcement and Support Intervention presented the report to the committee. He informed members that the park has about 20 erected tents on the Eastern Fringe, near where the USA training ground will be located.

The Head of Enforcement and Support Intervention continued that on Monday 2 April 2012, officers visited the camping site and gave notice to the trespassers to vacate the site by the morning of Wednesday 4 April 2012. They also informed them that legal proceedings may commence to obtain a court order for possession of the land. He spoke to who he believed to be the group's spokesperson who indicated that they were there peacefully and declared their right to protest. However, the Head of Enforcement and Support Intervention informed the committee that the group have pitched tents in the park and dug a fire pit and what appears to be, a latrine trench.

He continued that intelligence recently gathered, indicated that the numbers of occupiers have decreased, but commented that if action is not taken, there could be a possibility that the trespassers will remain on site and cause further damage and that the numbers could increase again.

A member stated that the council respects the right of the group to protest but that this should not lead to criminal damage or the prevention of the public from using the park in the way intended. The member advised officers to proceed with caution and tactfulness. He continued that further intelligence should be sought in order to further justify their removal.

The Head of Enforcement and Support Intervention responded that the approach so far has been calm and friendly but that due regards has to be given to the wider community. The current usage is contrary to the use of the park as playing fields and for the use and enjoyment of the public. Moreover, the site is fast becoming a health and safety concern.

A member asked about the period the trespassers can remain on the park, specifically was 28 days notice required. The Senior Advocate replied that because the group are trespassing on non residential land, they only needed to be given at least 2 days notice.

The Head of Enforcement and Support Intervention informed the committee that there is a senior meeting at Scotland Yard discussing strategic ways to collectively respond to similar situations in the run up to the Olympic Games. He stated that he will update the committee on the outcome of this meeting.

The Mayor commented that the park will be in heavy use and will be pivotal as we lead up to the Olympic Games. The Mayor agrees with the right to demonstrate but not so to disadvantage the general public or local residents and therefore agrees that urgent action should be taken to resolve the matter.

The Head of Enforcement and Support Intervention presented the committee with another option, which is to identify individuals who have caused criminal activities and prosecute them under the breach of by-laws.

Members advised against this route and asked that officers commence legal possession of the site.

A member enquired about who will pay for the legal cost. The Senior Advocate advised that all legal costs will be met out of the Communities Localities and Culture budget at the Council, rather than be paid from charity funds.

Members requested that swift action be taken but advised that public relations also be managed and linked to the Mayor's office. Members request that they be kept abreast of the situation.

Decision

2.1 Agree that the persons camping on Mile End Park are trespassers, that their occupation of a section of the Park is contrary to the objects of the King George's Fields – Mile End Charity and that action should be taken to remove them.

2.2 Authorise officers to take all necessary and lawful action to have the trespassers removed from Mile End Park, including taking court proceedings for possession, if necessary.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT

There were none

The meeting ended at 3.40pm

Chair, Mayor Lutfur Rahman
King George's Field Charity Board