

## **User Group Protocol**

1 Hackney Council welcomes the establishment of User Groups for Parks and Open Spaces, and will work to support them and engage with them on issues of Park management and development.

2 User Groups, the Hackney Parks Forum and staff of the London Borough of Hackney work together co-operatively and strive to improve their local park, and to achieve the shared goals and objectives that are defined in Hackney's Parks Strategy, the Constitution of the User Group and Hackney Parks Forum, and, where relevant, in individual Park Management Plans. Hackney Council will provide opportunities for User Groups to contribute to the Parks Strategy and to agree changes before they are finalised.

3 Hackney's Parks Department encourages User Groups to identify goals or objectives that are a priority in each year

4 A Parks Development Officer will be appointed as the main contact for the User Group. This officer will notify and consult on all matters relating specifically to the park or open spaces and be responsible for all queries including:

- \* Managing the development and implementation of the Park Management Plan and Green Flag application;
- \* Any proposed development within the park
- \* Requests for new capital expenditure
- \* Advising on external funding application preparation and procedure;
- \* Co-ordinating handover and publicity of completed development projects.
- \* Planning Agreements and other income from developers

5 The Parks Development Officer will liaise with relevant officers and external organisations for queries and complaints regarding:

- \* Maintenance problems within the park;
- \* Urgent security and safety issues;
- \* Arboricultural issues;
- \* Dogs, pest control and management;
- \* Crime and antisocial behaviour
- \* Graffiti and vandalism.
- \* Cycle routes
- \* Waterways issues
- \* Events and commercial usage of the park

6 When responding to complaints from members of the public, the Parks Department will provide the complainant with up-to-date contact details for the relevant User Group. For complaints important enough to be reported to Parks Development Officers, details of the complaint will be sent to the User Group, and if any remedial action is proposed it will be discussed with the User Group by the Parks Development Officer. Parks Development Officers will always seek, in respect of such remedial action, to respect agreements already reached with the User Group and reflect previous discussion with the User Group on the same or similar issues. A summary of complaints dealt with by Parks Development Officers will be provided to each HPF/LBH Liaison Meeting.

7 Nominated Parks Development Officers will attend a minimum of three evening or weekend meetings of the User Group per annum, including the AGM. Other Parks Staff may attend during the year by invitation. In addition, User Groups will appoint a representative to attend meetings and site visits during working hours if they wish.

8 Hackney's Parks Department will work with User Groups to identify and apply for funding from external agencies. Time and officer commitment will be allocated according to the size, complexity, estimated cost, future maintenance requirements and likely benefits to the wider community of the proposal. Projects should support the objectives of Hackney's Parks Strategy and the User Group's Constitution.

9 Hackney's Parks Department will help User Groups with any reasonable requests for publicity for meetings, events etc. It will also publicise the activities of the User Group on the Council's website.

10 Hackney's Parks Department will consult and/or keep User Groups informed on issues relevant to parks including funding, the activities of other groups, events and other relevant information. This will be through regular emails and the Hackney Parks Forum quarterly public meeting.

11 Hackney's Parks Department will take due notice of recommendations and concerns from the User Group and provide a written explanation of their view on these recommendations within Hackney's standard response time<sup>1</sup>

12 In the event of a Dispute between User Group and Parks Department, or between HPF and Parks Department, where an agreement or compromise cannot readily be reached by discussion, the parties will seek resolution through the Hackney Compact dispute resolution procedure. This will be set up between Hackney Council and Hackney Council for Voluntary Service [HCVS] and their Community Empowerment Network [CEN] and agreed by Parks Department and HPF.

13 Hackney's Parks Department will support User Groups to be representative of the wider community, and to represent the views of local people

14 Hackney's Parks Department and Hackney Parks Forum will support User Groups to adopt a constitution, elect a chair and other Officers, and hold Annual General Meetings. A Model Constitution will be made available for User Groups to adopt or adapt.

15 User Groups must seek the permission of Hackney's Parks Department should they wish to make any physical changes to their local park

Millfields Users Group

Signed .....

Position .....

Date: agreed by committee 14 October 2010

[London Borough of Hackney]

Signed .....

Position .....

Date .....

1 See <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/xc-customer-care-standards.htm>