

Attendees: Tony Leach: (Parks for London), Claire Powell (Hounslow), Ishbel Murray (Richmond and Wandsworth), Andy Dalby-Welsh (London Youth Games), Mark Foster (London Sport), Chris Donkin (London Sport), Cassie Bridger (Barnet), Christine Parsloe (Merton), Lisa Pottinger, Richard Wiltshire (Tower Hamlets), Andrea Keeble (Haringey), Thorsten Dreyer (Tower Hamlets), Mark Cook (Sport England), Joyce Guthrie (Waltham Forest), Warren Leigh (Sport England), Suzie Munnery (Hounslow), Chris Bunting (Ealing), Philippa Turner (National Archives), Andrew Clark (Sutton), Georgie Salzedo (National Archives), Iain Varah (Redbridge), Roger Winfield (RBKC), Lorna Lee (Waltham Forest), Stefania Horne (Hounslow), Cathy Clarke (Newham), Rebecca Towers (Southwark), Elena Pippou (Haringey)

1. Update on reopening of the leisure sector

- Chris Donkin, London Sport
- Questions and discussion

Chris Donkin, London Sport

- London Sport have been mapping the reopening of leisure centres across London. Most boroughs have come back to them with information.
- A large number of leisure centres have reopened, and the majority of boroughs have managed to reach agreements with their leisure operators. In some cases discussions are still ongoing.
- There are certain pockets of London and particular boroughs where centres have not opened. Often centres haven't yet opened where they require access to schools.
- Where centres have reopened, they have mostly opened for gyms and group exercise. It has been harder to gather information on swimming pools, although London Sport are doing some more work to gather this info.
- London Sport have picked up upon various concerns from boroughs. In order to provide additional capacity onsite, space has been sought in areas such as sport halls. Some centres are only providing access to adult members, so there are concerns that young people and children are missing out. Often use is for members only. There are barriers for participants with disabilities.
- There are concerns about what the picture will be like in the winter months when there will be greater pressure on indoor sports facilities. London Sport is looking into adapting other spaces such as sports halls and railway arches.

Questions and discussion

- A number of borough representatives updated the group on the situation in their area. It was reported that people were dubious about returning to leisure centres at first but things are now starting to pick up. Booked activities have been busy, including swimming lessons. In most cases councils were opening up leisure centres, including swimming pools, but not all were open yet for financial reasons.
- The priority has been opening up centres to the general public. More targeted provision and community activity hasn't started up yet in many cases, but this is starting to change.

- There are still a number of financial issues that need to be resolved with contractors. Boroughs remain in negotiation on specific areas. In some cases a deed of variation has been used to revise the contract with the contractor.
- Councils who have GLL as a provider met and agreed some common principles early on. In subsequent meetings they have shared what they can do commonly whilst also recognising that all contracts are different. This joint working has been very useful to local authorities.
- A question was asked about whether Sport England were looking to bid for some funds to support the leisure sector. Mark Cook said he would look into this and report back.
- There has been some fantastic support for the London Youth Games from boroughs despite the challenging situation. The virtual games had more than 40,000 entries. The virtual offer will remain even as leisure facilities open.

2. Cultural activity online during Covid-19

- Cassie Bridger, Assistant Director: Greenspaces & Leisure, London Borough of Barnet
- Lorna Lee, Asst Director, Culture and Heritage Services, London Borough of Waltham Forest
- Richard Wiltshire, Archives Manager, London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- Questions and discussion

Cassie Bridger, Barnet

- Barnet reviewed how they could continue to engage with residents at the start of lockdown. They swiftly engaged with GLL on what their communications and engagement plan would be and set up a 'Covid hub' which had various elements to it, such as videos, info about the benefits of exercise and guidance on reopening. GLL also have the Better UK app which provides information on local centres and access to free workouts and local classes, including a 'workout of the week'. Barnet have been doing some work to analyse the use and demand for this.
- The council is now thinking about how they can build on this digital offer, building up on the interest that has developed over lockdown. This is part of discussions about recovery plans and remobilisation of the service. They have developed online courses for children and young people over the summer, ranging from cooking, arts and craft to fitness activities, and an early years resource pack. They have coordinated sessions via Zoom and there has been a particular focus on mental health.
- They have been working with local politicians, who have been producing very short films on the importance of wellbeing and leisure, including the Mayor and Cabinet member for leisure.

Lorna Lee, Waltham Forest

- Waltham Forest was the first London Borough of Culture last year, and plans were already in place to build a legacy. Within three weeks of lockdown they had repurposed their funding and established a virtual programme. They worked with 42 individuals and artists in the first month that attracted 16,000 participants.
- Phase 2 launched in May, with a focus on community connections. Six local organisations were commissioned to put on a virtual programme. These can be adapted to being delivered in person when allowed.
- They delivered 500 kite kits to people who signed up. Designs were shared on Instagram and social media, and they are hoping these can eventually be displayed publicly. Walthamstow Garden Party was delivered virtually, partnering with local radio. A cohort of 20 young people has been brought together to share experiences of the pandemic, and a film is being

made about this. The borough's work has helped sustain the local creative sector as well as providing a cultural offer to the community.

- The William Morris Gallery has run a successful series of zoom talks. They have asked for donations and raised £5k from 12 talks, and people often give more than the minimum.
- Next year Waltham Forest will be looking at opportunities to reshape their offer, with a view to maximising participation. They are looking at a mixed model of trying to generate income from some events that were previously free. They are working closely with the employment and skills team as part of the recovery work.

You can find out more on the website here: <https://wfculture.co.uk/virtual>

Richard Wiltshire, Tower Hamlets

- Tower Hamlets Archives holds collections dating back to the 16th century. They are based in Mile End, close to Queen Mary University.
- They have aimed to capture the experiences of local people during lockdown. They launched a survey in June. For those that wanted a higher level of participation, people were invited to volunteer more time and share their experiences. So far they have received 70 images and around 150 are on their way, depicting scenes of life during lockdown. Twitter has been the best way of getting people onto the site. So far they have only received nine responses to the survey although they are hoping this will increase.
- This project has helped the archives department to engage with the community. It has enabled them to keep in touch with existing volunteers who are missing that structure in their lives as well as new volunteers.

Link to the website: <http://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history-whats-on>

Questions and discussion

- In response to a question Lorna explained that Waltham Forest has been able repurpose their Legends of the Forest volunteers from LBoC into Covid volunteers. Volunteers have been really happy to support the effort.
- Allotments have been a lifeline during lockdown for many different types of communities. Walthamstow Wetlands had a quarter of a million visits during early lockdown which brought various challenges but also showed the importance of outdoor space. Tony Leach shared info about allotments in London: <https://www.allaboutallotments.co.uk/associations-london>
- A question was asked about how to disconnect GLL from their corporate brand into a local brand. Cassie said this is likely to come down to the relationships the council has with them locally. Barnet have built up a relationship over time so GLL have an understanding of the local area and local needs. Their MD came down to one of the sessions, and they have aimed to produce materials that feel local and not too corporate.