



Paper No.

25-252

Cabinet

Title

Adoption of a revised Events Policy for the borough's parks, commons, and open spaces (excluding Battersea Park)

Cabinet Member for Environment

Cllr Paul White

Details of Executive Director

Paul Chadwick, Executive Director Environment and Community Services

1. Recommendation/s:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1.1. Note the consultation feedback on the draft revised policy and responses to the issues raised as set out in appendices 3 to 9.
- 1.2. Note the changes made to the policy following consultation, as summarised in paragraphs 2.28 to 2.30, and set out in detail in appendix 1.
- 1.3. Note the updated Equality Impact Needs Analysis;
- 1.4. Note that the separate existing policy for Battersea Park will remain unchanged and a separate review of the policy will be carried out and reported to the Executive following Welcome to Wandsworth 2025 (LBoC).
- 1.5. Approve the revised policy at appendix 1 to replace the existing policy adopted in 2014.
- 1.6. Agree that any events that are contractually agreed by the time of this decision, continue to be delivered in line with the 2014 policy.



Reference to Council Priorities

This decision contributes to:

A more compassionate Wandsworth

This decision contributes to a more compassionate Wandsworth by contributing to our goal of being recognised as a Borough of Culture.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Parks are important spaces for our communities and provide opportunities for relaxation, sport, recreation, and nature. We are investing in our parks as part of our commitment to making Wandsworth a more compassionate place, making parks, open spaces and commons more accessible to everyone.
- 1.2. A variety of events of different sizes and types take place across the borough's parks, commons and open spaces. The policy that governs these events (other than those in Battersea Park) was adopted in 2014. Much has changed since then and the existing policy has been reviewed to ensure it is up to date and meets changing needs.
- 1.3. On 3 March 2025 the Executive agreed a draft revised policy for consultation. Consultation took place in April and May 2025.
- 1.4. This report sets out the findings from the consultation and recommends that Cabinet should adopt a revised policy to replace the policy adopted in 2014.
- 1.5. We have listened to what residents and stakeholders have told us during the consultation and have made changes in response to the feedback.

2. Details

- 2.1. *Context and background*
- 2.2. Wandsworth Council is committed to making the borough a fairer, more compassionate, and more sustainable place. Our year as London Borough of Culture (LBOC) 2025, called Welcome to Wandsworth, places culture at the heart of developing a people-led approach to boosting health, happiness, and equality of opportunity.



- 2.3. Our parks are for everyone and we value them as places for relaxation, recreation, sport, play, connecting with nature, and as havens for biodiversity.
- 2.4. Springfield Park is a new 32-acre public park being developed in partnership with the NHS and developers in Tooting. It was formally opened earlier in July 2025.
- 2.5. We have secured planning permission for a new pocket park on Swaffield Road and will be starting construction later in the year, investing £400k. The park will include new play equipment, sensory planting, and biodiversity improvements.
- 2.6. Our play strategy sets out the roadmap for transforming play spaces across the borough, including in our parks. We have dedicated £4m of the council's capital resources to implement the first phase of improvements and will start consultation on the first projects after the summer.
- 2.7. We are working on plans for Tooting Triangle, making this norther part of the common more accessible and resilient. So far, we have allocated £600k of investment for the site and we will start engagement with communities around the Triangle in the autumn.
- 2.8. In 2024/25, seven of our parks, commons, and open spaces were awarded Green Flag status and we have set ourselves a target to reach eight Green Flags this year.
- 2.9. Events in our parks, commons and open spaces play a significant role in achieving these ambitious goals. We want to enable access to events in parks and open spaces across the borough, reaching all communities.
- 2.10. A wide variety of events take place in Wandsworth's parks, commons and opens spaces, ranging from major events such as the Battersea Park Fireworks to smaller charity and community events. We want to make sure that citizens across the borough can enjoy events in parks, commons, and open spaces local to them and that every corner of the borough comes alive in an explosion of creativity - from Roehampton to Battersea, Tooting to Putney, during Welcome to Wandsworth 2025 and beyond.
- 2.11. Events can generate significant benefits, for our citizens, communities, and local businesses. Some of the benefits associated with events include:



- Providing opportunities for young people through performance and employment;
 - Improving the availability and accessibility of culture, arts, and entertainment, strengthened by the Council's Access for All policy;
 - Building strong and integrated communities that values everyone's contribution;
 - Enhancing the image of the borough and stimulating inward investment;
 - Offering local business opportunities both at and surrounding events;
 - Generating income for local projects through fundraising;
 - Generating income to invest in parks, commons, and open spaces.
- 2.12. Any income generated from events in parks, commons and open spaces is reinvested in maintaining and improving our spaces, in line with open space legislation.
- 2.13. We value our parks, commons and open spaces as important places for nature and people, and we recognise that events in parks, commons and open spaces must be sustainable and carefully managed to deliver benefits for the citizens of Wandsworth. The proposals in this report seek to enable the delivery of a sustainable and varied events programme while minimising any impacts events may cause for parks, commons and open space infrastructure and the wider community.
- 2.14. Events in parks, commons, and open spaces (excluding Battersea Park) are governed by the council's existing policy, which was adopted by the Executive on 1 December 2014. This policy has been reviewed to ensure it is up to date and meets changing needs.
- 2.15. Income generated from events in parks, commons and open space contributes to the annual concession fee of £3.7m payable by Enable to the council. The concession fee is derived from income generated across the Enable portfolio and includes other services such as hall hire and sports facilities. The concession fee income forms an integral part of the Culture and Leisure division budget, contributing to the costs of managing and maintaining parks, open spaces, and commons. The council's grounds maintenance contract alone has an estimated annual contract value of over £3.8m.



2.16. *The review*

- 2.17. Officers together with Enable Leisure & Culture have reviewed the existing policy adopted in 2014 with a view to ensuring that the Welcome to Wandsworth 2025 reaches all parts of the borough. The 2014 policy covers all parks except for Battersea Park. A separate policy applies to Battersea Park, recognising that it has the capacity to host events on a larger scale and offers opportunities for events in different locations within the park. The Battersea Park policy will be reviewed following the end of the year as London Borough of Culture. Clapham Common, while partly in the London Borough of Wandsworth, is managed by Lambeth Council and as such is not included in the scope of the Wandsworth policy.
- 2.18. The existing policy sets maximum event size and frequency parameters for events up to 10,000 attendees. However, while the policy does set parameters, these have not been used to the full extent. While a policy must set parameters, it does not mean that events of the maximum size or frequency will take place, as has been demonstrated by the application of the adopted policy.
- 2.19. All event applications are considered carefully at the earliest stage. Event applications can and are rejected regularly prior to wider stakeholder engagement, based on the expected event impact or concerns about event suitability. The council takes its responsibilities for parks, open spaces and commons very seriously. Ensuring that events are managed sustainably and with minimal impact is key to this.
- 2.20. The 2014 policy sets limits on the size and frequency of events. As part of the review, we have considered these existing limits and consulted on them. The majority of parks, open spaces and commons would only ever be used for small community events. They are small spaces that serve the communities immediately around them. Some of our larger greenspaces (Battersea Park, King George's Park, Tooting Common, and Wandsworth Common) may be capable of hosting larger events and the 2014 policy allows this. As part of the policy review and in response to feedback, we have put further restrictions in place for one of our larger sites (Wandsworth Common).
- 2.21. The table below sets out the number of events of different sizes in Wandsworth parks and open spaces.



- 2.22. In the most recent three years (2022-23 to 2024-25) there were no events category B (2,500 to 4,999 attendees) or category C events (5,000 to 10,000 attendees) in any parks, commons and open spaces other than Battersea Park. This year (2025-26), two event days in category C are scheduled to take place at Tooting Common as part of the London Borough of Culture celebrations.
- 2.23. The policy review has been informed by experience of managing events over the past decade, [best practice guidance from Parks for London](#) (a not-for-profit organisation providing a strategic voice for and champion of London's green space sector), and the changing nature of the events that are taking place in our parks, commons, and open spaces.
- 2.24. The revised policy seeks to achieve the following objectives:
- Minimise, mitigate, and manage the impact on the environment and wildlife in our parks, commons and open spaces and surrounding areas.
 - Ensure events in parks, commons and open spaces contribute to making Wandsworth a fairer, more compassionate, and more sustainable place.
 - Establish a diverse and varied events programme across the borough.
 - Encourage events that have strong community benefit and engagement and increase accessibility.
 - Ensure good practice and legal compliance in all aspects of event management.
 - Ensure that the number of events is permitted is sustainable.
 - Ensure that event design, location and management minimise the disruption to users and the local area, with public safety being a priority.
 - Ensure meaningful engagement and communication with key stakeholders.
 - Maximise opportunities to generate income to parks, commons, and open spaces.
- 2.25. On 13 February 2025 the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee received a report setting out a proposed revised draft policy for consultation. The Committee debated the revised draft policy and agreed to recommend it to the Executive for approval, subject to reinstating reference to consultation with, rather than notification of, Friends of Parks groups and Management Advisory Committees.



2.26. Between the meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the meeting on the Executive on 3 March 2025, an early engagement meeting with Friends of Parks groups and Management Advisory Committees took place. This meeting provided valuable feedback, and further revisions were made to the draft policy in advance of the Executive meeting. The changes can be seen in the Executive papers, links to which are included in the background papers section of this report. The early engagement session also helped to inform and improve the online consultation due to go live following Executive approval.

2.27. Appendix 1 sets out the revised policy recommended for adoption, following consultation, alongside:

- the draft policy agreed for consultation by the Executive on 3 March 2025 to show how the policy recommended for adoption has evolved since the consultation draft was agreed;
- an explanation of the reasons for the proposed changes;
- the existing policy adopted in December 2014.

The recommended policy clauses fall into four broad categories:

- Enabling more residents in more parts of the borough to access events
- Improving the management and mitigation of event impacts
- Being a listening council
- Securing additional social benefits from events

2.28. *Key changes and commitments following consultation*

2.29. As a listening council we are committed to working with our communities to shape policies and services. In response to the consultation feedback we have made some key changes to the policy. The appendices to this report show how we have considered feedback and how the policy has evolved since approval of the draft earlier in the year.

2.30. Key changes include:

- Making clearer that no events over 10,000 attendees will be permitted in any greenspaces other than Battersea Park.



- Restricting events on Wandsworth Common to Category A events only, limiting attendee numbers to 2,499.
- Strengthening the involvement of tree and ecology experts in assessing event sites before and after events.
- Making sure that the terms and conditions of hire are updated regularly to update sustainable event management requirements as this area of event management is constantly evolving and we want events to be as sustainable as possible.
- Increasing democratic oversight by requiring officers to consult with the relevant Cabinet member before taking certain decisions under the policy.
- Retaining the policy clause in the 2014 policy that limits the use of sports pitches for events.
- Requiring event organisers to minimise the time it takes them to build and remove event infrastructure.
- Clarifying how the policy relates to licensing, planning and other statutory permissions that may be required for events in greenspaces.

2.31. *Consultation and engagement process*

2.32. Following approval of the draft revised policy by the Executive, consultation and engagement took place in April and May 2025. The consultation and engagement included:

- An online survey open to everyone on the Wandsworth Council consultation and engagement hub from 7 April 2025 to 12 May 2025;
- Targeted focus groups with young people of different backgrounds, facilitated by the council's youth service and voluntary sector organisations working with young people;
- A second dedicated engagement session with Friends of Parks groups and Management Advisory Committee.

2.33. The online survey was promoted extensively and received 833 responses. This is on the higher end of responses received to council consultations and demonstrates the effectiveness of the promotional activity, as well as the importance people place on parks, commons open spaces. In addition to the online survey, there were also emails from individuals, including several with the same or similar wording. A report on the responses to the online survey and emails received is included as Appendix 3. Appendix 5 summarises the themes and issues raised, alongside an overall response.



2.34. Respondents gave feedback on the specific policy statements in their responses as well as raising some wider issues, including:

- The principle of holding events in parks, commons, and open spaces;
- How the content of events should be informed, including whether events should be aimed at very local or wider audiences;
- Whether the same policy should apply to all parks (other than Battersea Park and Clapham Common).

2.35. Promotion of the online survey used a range of methods to reach

- News story published on the council website on 7 April 2025
- News release issued to local news websites on the same day, resulting in news stories
- Social media posts on the council's social media channels on the same day
- Information shared with Friends of Parks groups and Management Advisory Committees, and amenity groups on the same day for circulation to their members and networks
- Inclusion on Brightside Online (the council's weekly main e-newsletter) on 11 April 2025
- Inclusion in the council's voluntary and community sector newsletter for onward circulation to VCS organisations' networks thereby widening reach into their networks and membership on 22 April 2025
- Distribution to residents' association via the council's housing department during week commencing 28 April 2025
- Targeted social media advert to reach audiences under 35 and men who were underrepresented in the responses to the online survey
- Final call to action follow up in Brightside Online on 9 May 2025
- Final call to action social media posts on council social media platforms over the last weekend
- Final call to action posters at sites that would be capable of hosting larger events (Tooting Common, Wandsworth Common, King George's Park) over the final weekend

Alongside the survey, we ran a series of targeted focus groups, aimed at reaching young people, women, and girls from a range of different backgrounds. We worked with our youth participation team, who designed the focus group content, identified



groups, delivered the sessions, or worked with voluntary sector youth organisations to deliver the sessions. These focus groups gave us insight into how young people use parks, the events they'd like to see more of, any worries or concerns about events and how to best communicate with them. A report on the feedback received during focus groups is included as Appendix 4. Appendix 5 summarises the themes and issues raised, alongside an overall response.

2.36. The young people's focus groups included:

- Base Youth Centre Roehampton
- Rainbow Power LGBTQ Youth Forum
- Rose Community Centre Battersea
- Young Carers youth group
- Unique Youth at the George Shearing Centre for young people aged 13-25 years old with learning disabilities and complex needs
- CLICK juniors and seniors for care experienced young people
- Click together for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

2.37. Most responses to the online survey came from individuals. However, there were a number of organisations or groups that responded to the survey, provided detailed written submissions, or a combination of the two. Their submissions have been included in the analysis of the online survey (Appendix 3) and the overall response (Appendix 5). Detailed responses to the submissions made by the following parks, open spaces, and commons stakeholder groups are included as Appendices 6 to 9:

- Tooting Commons Management Advisory Committee
- Friends of Tooting Common
- Friends of Wandsworth Common
- Wandsworth Common Management Advisory Committee

2.38. *Alternative options*

2.39. Alternative options considered alongside a review of the adopted policy include:

- Revoking the adopted policy without replacement: This option is not recommended as it would leave the Council without a structured framework to manage requests for events in parks, commons, and open spaces. Decisions would be taken without reference to agreed parameters.



- Retaining the adopted policy: This option is not recommended as the adopted policy has not been reviewed since 2014. It is important that the policies followed by the Council are kept up to date and reflect residents' needs. The Council is also subject to the Best Value Duty, requiring it to secure continuous improvement in the way it exercises its functions, considering a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. The review of the adopted policy contributes to the Council meeting the Best Value Duty.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1. The Executive Director of Finance comments that events in parks, commons, and open spaces are managed on behalf of the Council by Enable Leisure & Culture under the Leisure and Culture concession contract. Enable Leisure & Culture ensure that the events meet the regulatory requirements of hosting public events within the borough and surplus income is shared with the council via a profit share arrangement built into the contract.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1. There are no immediate legal implications arising from the adoption of the Events Policy for the borough's parks, commons, and open spaces. South London Legal Partnership will provide advice and support if instructed to do so following any decision to procure and award a contract as a result of approval of the recommendations made under this report.

5. Equalities Implications

- 5.1. The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Council when exercising its functions must have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 5.2. An initial Equality Impact Needs Analysis (EINA) of the draft revised policy. The EINA is attached as Appendix 2 to this report. The EINA sets out the possible impacts and mitigations for individuals who share a protected characteristic. The EINA will be kept under review and updated during and following the consultation period.



6. Reference to any accompanying papers:

- Appendix 1 – Revised policy for adoption
- Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Needs Analysis (EINA)
- Appendix 3 – Online survey and email responses consultation report
- Appendix 4 – Young people’s engagement report
- Appendix 5 – Overall response to themes and issues raised in the consultation
- Appendix 6 – Written submission from Tooting Commons Management Advisory Committee and response
- Appendix 7 – Written submission from the Friends of Tooting Common and response
- Appendix 8 – Friends of Wandsworth Common and Wandsworth Common Management Advisory Committee (joint response)
- Appendix 9 – Further written submission from the Friends of Wandsworth Common and response

7. Background Papers

None