**July 2023**

Cllr Peray Ahmet

Leader

Haringey Council

Dear Councillor Ahmet

**Formal Complaint to Haringey Council**

I am writing to you to complain in writing about the hire of Finsbury Park by Haringey Council to Festival Republic for major events over the summer and about the problems this causes.

**Size—**the area that your customer occupies is roughly half of the total *amenity* *space* available to ordinary park users.

**Duration**—the time taken to fence off our amenity comes on top of all the other events held in the park and it is simply unacceptable. This, in an area with high levels of deprivation where nearly 40% of residents in Wards surrounding our park, have no garden of their own. The park is their garden. This is a social justice issue.

**Damage—**to the ecology and the fabric of the park is significant and while the paths and carriageways can be fixed (although only in time for next year's events) the ecological impacts are harder to reverse. Damage to trees, soil and wildlife and air pollution caused by the large amounts of HGVs needed to truck in-and-out the infrastructure needed to host a festival in a park—and the accompanying generators— are also a risk to wildlife and to humans. In a climate and biodiversity crisis and with toxic levels of air pollution already in London, it is irresponsible to use our parks in this way in 2023, let alone up to 2027.

**Noise**—levels for residents in this densely populated part of London are also unacceptable. While the council may claim that noise levels are within legal limits, try being one of the residents next to the park who are less happy to open their windows for two full weekends during summer due to the noise. And how would you like your flat to shake and vibrate for six full days?

Haringey suffers above-average levels of mental health disorder: the percentage of the population living with such a disorder is 22.28%. This is only 1.76% lower than the highest-ranking area, NHS City and Hackney, which had a percentage of 24.04%. The council noisy concerts may be detrimental to people’s mental health.

**Safety**—this is also a recurring concern for residents and attendees. The area cannot easily cope with up to an additional 50,000 ticket-holders and staff per day, and so roads are blocked and closed, public transport grinds to a halt and roads become impassable for locals. This makes collecting children from school, coming home from work, walking to the shops or visiting friends harder and scary. It leads to many people not leaving their houses. Effectively, prisoners in their own homes.

**Management**—of the events feels poor compared to that of local, purpose-built venues such as the Emirates stadium. The security team sometimes struggle to control ingress and egress.

Last year, this led to a serous and widely-publicised crushing event just outside the main gate and within 100 metres of ‘Council Event Control’. Fortunately there were no fatalities on that occasion. At a previous Wireless, there were drug related-deaths. Each year, managing up to 50,000 ticket holders in a confined space that is not purpose-built, offers to create new crowd control problems.

The nature of ‘all day’ events means the streets become full of public drinking. With a lack of toilets provided outside the event space, our local streets become open toilets. Antisocial behaviour blights the locals who live nearest, not least in Brownswood Ward, in neighbouring Hackney.

This misuse of public land, limited access for some of our poorest communities, where no consultations have been done with residents and where you have behind closed doors signed a five-year deal for less money per year, ought to be consigned to the history books. We have some of the best event spaces in the world and we should be supporting them and looking at far less damaging ways to fund our parks.

The Borough’s parks budget needs to become *less* dependent on Event Income and the Council needs to end this destructive cycle. Haringey should work with the surrounding councils and park stakeholders to fund Finsbury Park without major events and protect our public park so it is open for all and can help with Climate Resilience.

And Festival Republic needs to find a more suitable, purpose-built venue.

#peopleneedparks

Regards

Xxxxxxxxxxxxx

N4 Resident