

Finsbury Park and Stroud Green Neighbourhood Forum Constitution

Name and duration

1. The name of the Neighbourhood Forum shall be the Finsbury Park and Stroud Green Neighbourhood Forum (the Forum).
2. The duration of the Forum is five years from its formal designation by Hackney, Haringey and Islington Councils.

Area of Benefit

3. The area in which the Forum will pursue its objectives is the Finsbury Park and Stroud Green Neighbourhood Area (the Neighbourhood Area), which is the area designated by Hackney, Haringey and Islington Councils for which the Forum will produce a Neighbourhood Plan.
4. The Neighbourhood Area may be revised by the Forum from time to time by agreement with Hackney, Haringey and Islington Councils under their statutory powers.

Objectives

5. The Forum shall:
 - a. Promote or improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the Finsbury Park and Stroud Green Neighbourhood Area, through the preparation and implementation of a Neighbourhood Plan, in accordance with the Localism Act 2011;
 - b. Build and maintain a diverse Forum Membership;
 - c. Ascertain, co-ordinate and reflect the views of the community that it represents, to liaise with other community groups within the Neighbourhood Area, and to fairly express the diversity of opinions and outlooks of the people;
 - d. Remain independent of any party political, religious, trade or campaign organisation;
 - e. Promote and improve joint working between Hackney, Haringey and Islington Councils and residents and workers within the Neighbourhood Area;
 - f. Direct development towards areas identified in the Neighbourhood Plan as being most appropriate for regeneration, and promote the preservation and restoration of areas identified in the Neighbourhood Plan as justifying conservation;
 - g. Ensure that development contributes towards reducing economic inequality within the Neighbourhood Area;
 - h. Ensure that development is appropriate to the character of its surrounding area, as defined in the Neighbourhood Plan, and;
 - i. Work with Hackney, Haringey and Islington Councils and other organisations to explore delivery models that reward patient capital, increase human capital, increase community assets, and/or increase not for profit enterprise within the Neighbourhood Area

Structure of the Forum

Membership of the Forum

6. The Forum shall consist of four types of member, drawn from different parts of the Neighbourhood Area and different sections of its community:
 - a. Resident Member – a person whose usual residence is within the Neighbourhood Area;
 - b. Worker Member – an employee / self-employed person whose usual workplace is within the Neighbourhood Area;
 - c. Elected Official Member – a ward councillor, Member of Parliament, or London Assembly Member whose constituency forms part of the Neighbourhood Area, and;

- d. Affiliated Organisation – a formally constituted community group that has an interest in the Neighbourhood area.
7. In furtherance of its objectives, the Forum may take any form of lawful action necessary to achieve the objectives of the Forum. In addition to the various powers conferred elsewhere in this Constitution and its annex(es), these actions may include:
- a. Raising funds by donation, grants, or other means;
 - b. Opening a bank account in the name of the Forum to manage such funds;
 - c. Making payments for goods and services to be applied to the objectives of the Forum, and for no other purpose;
 - d. Taking out any contracts that it may see fit.

Forum Officers

8. The Forum shall elect four officers from its Resident, Worker and Elected Official members:
- a. Chair of the Forum;
 - b. Secretary / Vice Chair of the Forum;
 - c. Treasurer, and;
 - d. Membership Secretary.
9. The Chair of the Forum shall be responsible for:
- a. Calling and chairing Full Forum Meetings.
10. The Secretary / Vice Chair of the Forum shall be responsible for:
- a. Organising Full Forum Meetings;
 - b. Managing the preparation, distribution, and approval of agendas, minutes and other papers for Full Forum Meetings;
 - c. Maintaining this Constitution and its annex(es), and making them available to Members;
 - d. Managing decision-making procedures in accordance with this Constitution and its annex(es), and;
 - e. Acting as Chair of the Forum, if the Chair is on leave or otherwise unavailable.
11. The Treasurer shall be responsible for:
- a. In consultation with the Steering Group, proposing a Budget for the following year, at least annually, to be approved or rejected by the Forum;
 - b. Maintaining the accounts of the Forum, and submitting a summary of these to the Chair of the Forum at every Full Forum Meeting, and the Head of the Steering Group prior to each Steering Group Meeting;
 - c. Approving expenditure in accordance with the approved Budget, or otherwise seeking approval of the Forum, and;
 - d. Ensuring that funds are utilised effectively.
12. The Membership Secretary shall be responsible for:
- a. Maintaining a register of current Forum Members, and submitting this to the Chair of the Forum at every Full Forum Meeting;
 - b. Maintaining equalities monitoring data of the Residents and Workers Panel;
 - c. Registering the Forum as a Data Controller with the Information Commissioners Office;
 - d. Ensuring day-to-day compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and;
 - e. Managing election procedures in accordance with this constitution and its annex(es).
13. Forum Officers shall be jointly responsible for:
- a. Interpreting this Constitution and its annex(es), and ensuring that it is adhered to, and;
 - b. Ensuring that the Residents and Workers Panel includes people from across the nine protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010.

Steering Group

14. The Forum shall elect from its Resident, Worker and Elected Official members a Steering Group of no more than 15 Members (with positions remaining vacant until filled in accordance with the Constitution). The Steering Group shall be made up of:
 - a. Between one and four Resident or Worker Members from each Borough, and;
 - b. No more than one Elected Official Member from each Borough.
15. The Steering Group shall elect one Steering Group Member as Head of the Steering Group, who shall be responsible for:
 - a. Calling and chairing Steering Group Meetings, and;
 - b. Acting on behalf of the Forum and representing it externally.
16. In furtherance of the objectives of the Forum, and in addition to the various powers conferred elsewhere in this Constitution and its annex(es), the Steering Group may:
 - a. Propose amendments to this Constitution and its annex(es), to be approved or rejected by the Forum by special resolution;
 - b. Propose amendments to the Neighbourhood Area, to be approved or rejected by the Forum by special resolution;
 - c. Propose the publication of Emerging Draft versions of the Neighbourhood Plan, to be approved or rejected by the Forum by special resolution;
 - d. Propose the submission of a Final Draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan to the three councils, to be approved or rejected by the Forum by special resolution;
 - e. Work with the three Boroughs as they see fit, and;
 - f. Express views on planning applications, in compliance with the latest published Emerging Draft Neighbourhood Plan, and;
 - g. Propose that the Forum be dissolved before the duration, to be approved or rejected by the Forum by special resolution (other than to comply with the law).
17. Steering Group Members shall be subject to re-election after a maximum term of 18 months. There is no limit to the number of terms a Steering Group Member may serve.

Residents and Workers Panel

18. Resident and Worker Forum Members may volunteer to join a Residents and Workers Panel, by providing equalities monitoring data to the Membership Secretary.
19. The Residents and Workers Panel shall have no formal powers, acting only as a consultee. The Steering Group shall appoint a Head of the Residents and Workers Panel to facilitate communication between the two bodies, and may invite them to make recommendations on behalf of the Panel.

Temporary Subgroup(s)

20. The Steering Group may create and dissolve Temporary Subgroup(s) at its discretion to carry out specific tasks and/or advise the Steering Group on specific issues. Forum Members may volunteer to join Temporary Subgroup(s).
21. Temporary Subgroup(s) shall have no formal powers, acting only as a consultee. The Steering Group shall appoint a Head of each Subgroup, to facilitate communication between the two bodies, and may invite them to make recommendations on behalf of the Panel.

Decision-making

22. In making decisions, the Forum and Steering Group shall actively seek to:
 - a. Consider the role of the Neighbourhood Area within London as a whole;
 - b. Meet the needs of those who have the poorest health and wellbeing outcomes within the Neighbourhood Area, as identified in the Neighbourhood Plan;
 - c. Learn from the successes and failures of past policies, projects, and programmes locally and elsewhere, whilst considering any differences in circumstances;

- d. Understand how changes may affect people in different ways depending on their particular circumstances, and;
- e. Have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

Forum

- 23. Matters that require approval by the Forum shall be decided by Resident, Worker and/or Elected Official members only. Affiliated Organisation members shall not vote on such matters.
- 24. Matters that require approval by the Forum shall be decided by the higher of 14 Forum Members or 10% of the Forum Membership, with at least three from each Borough. Where proposed resolutions have not originated from the Steering Group, at least seven of the Forum Members must be Steering Group Members.
- 25. The Chair of the Forum (or Vice Chair of the Forum, if they are absent) shall not vote on such matters, unless in the case of a tied vote.
- 26. Proposed special resolutions shall be communicated to Forum Members no less than 21 days prior to the decision being made.

Steering Group

- 27. Matters that require approval of the Steering Group shall be decided by a quorum of at least seven Steering Group Members, with at least two from each Borough.
- 28. In the event of a tied vote, the Head of the Steering Group shall have the deciding vote.
- 29. Proposed special resolutions shall be communicated to Steering Group Members no less than 14 days prior to the decision being made.

Annex A - Working Arrangements

Membership Applications and Resignations

1. In the case of Resident Members, Worker Members, and Elected Official Members, applications for membership shall be received by the Membership Secretary in the form of a completed Membership Application Form. Applications for membership shall be accepted or declined by the Membership Secretary in accordance with the membership definitions contained within Clause 6 of the Constitution. Resignations from membership shall be received by the Membership Secretary by way of written notice.
2. In the case of Affiliated Organisations, applications shall be received by the Steering Group in the form of a letter on headed paper, signed by an official of the potential Affiliated Organisation, nominating a representative to attend Forum meetings and speak on their behalf. Applications for membership shall be accepted or declined by the Steering Group at its discretion. Resignations from membership shall be received by the Steering Group by way of written notice.

Election procedures

3. Forum Officers and Steering Group Members shall be subject to re-election after a maximum term of 18 months. There is no limit to the number of terms an officer may serve.
4. Where a vacancy arises for a Forum Officer / Steering Group Member position:
 - a. The remaining Forum Officers / Steering Group Members shall divide the responsibilities of the vacant position until the vacancy is filled;
 - b. The vacancy shall be publicised and nominations invited ahead of elections;
 - c. Any nominations shall be seconded by a Forum Member other than the nominee, and;
 - d. Nominations shall be validated by the Membership Secretary in accordance with the Constitution and its annex(es).
5. No more than one Forum Officer / Steering Group Member shall be elected from any one household or immediate family (parent; sibling; child by blood, adoption, or marriage; spouse; grandparent or grandchild). Serving Forum Officers shall not stand for election as a Steering Group Member, and vice versa.
6. The Steering Group shall maintain and make publicly available a document setting out the Election Procedures for the Forum, which shall be in accordance with this Constitution and its annex(es).

Formal meetings

Full Forum meetings

7. Full Forum meetings shall be held within two calendar months of formal designation of the Forum by Hackney, Haringey and Islington Councils, and at least every four calendar months thereafter. The Chair of the Forum shall publicise the date, time and location of Full Forum Meetings to all those on the Register of Members no less than 21 days prior (other than to comply with the law).
8. All Forum Members may attend Full Forum Meetings. The Chair of the Forum may invite, at their discretion, non-Forum Members to attend Full Forum meetings as a non-voting observer. Forum Meetings shall be otherwise closed to other attendees. Full Forum Meetings may be attended by means of such communication methods as permit all persons participating in the meeting to communicate adequately with each other during the meeting.
9. The Chair of the Forum shall appoint a minute taker at the beginning of each Full Forum meeting. Key notes and actions from the meeting shall be published to all Forum Members no later than 21 days before the next Full Forum meeting.

10. The Chair of the Forum may order a Forum Member to withdraw from the meeting for causing persistent disruption, and/or adjourn meeting where conduct of Forum Members is persistently disorderly.

Steering Group Meetings

11. Steering Group meetings shall be held within two calendar months of the initial election of Steering Group Members by the Forum, and at least every three calendar months thereon. The Head of the Steering Group shall distribute the date, time and location of Steering Group meetings to all Steering Group Members no less than 14 days prior (other than to comply with the law).
12. All Steering Group Members may attend Steering Group Meetings, unless their membership has been suspended. The Head of the Steering Group may, at their discretion, invite one or more Forum Officers or Heads of Temporary Subgroups to attend part or whole of a Steering Group meeting as a non-voting Observer. Steering Group Meetings shall be otherwise closed to other attendees. Steering Group Meetings may be attended by means of such communication methods as permit all persons participating in the meeting to communicate adequately with each other during the meeting.
13. The Steering Group shall appoint a minute taker at the beginning of each Steering Group meeting. Key notes and actions from the meeting will be published to all Forum Members no later than 14 days before the next Full Forum meeting. In rare circumstances where there is a requirement for confidentiality, a confidential section of the minutes may be recorded, available to members of the Steering Group only.

Finance

14. Any money acquired by the Forum, including donations, contributions and bequests, shall be paid into the Forum bank account at the earliest opportunity.
15. Any deeds, cheques etc. relating to the Forum's bank account shall be signed by the Treasurer and at least one other Forum Officer or the Head of the Steering Group. Records must be kept of any petty cash transactions.
16. Upon request by a Forum Member, the Treasurer shall make the full accounts available for inspection.
17. At least annually, the Steering Group shall invite an appropriate person to inspect the accounts and report their findings to the Forum. This person shall not be a Forum Officer or Steering Group Member. If the turnover of the Forum exceeds £5,000 in the year in question, this person shall not be a Forum Member.
18. Forum Officers / Steering Group Members shall not receive any payment from the Forum except for bona fide expenses as approved by the Treasurer and submitted and recorded in writing.

Exercising powers conferred by the Constitution

Publication of Emerging Draft versions of Neighbourhood Plan

19. The Steering Group may propose to the Forum that it make publicly available an Emerging Draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan, with the approval of the Steering Group.
20. Proposals to make publicly available an Emerging Draft version of Neighbourhood Plan shall be approved for publication or rejected by the Forum.

Submission of Final Draft version of Neighbourhood Plan

21. The Steering Group may propose to the Forum that it submit a Final Draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan to the three local authorities, with the approval of the Steering Group.
22. Proposals to submit a Final Draft version of the Neighbourhood Plan to the three local authorities shall be approved or rejected by the Forum.

Expressing views on planning applications

23. Until the Neighbourhood Plan is adopted by Hackney, Haringey and Islington Councils, the Forum shall only express views on any planning application (other than those it makes itself) in compliance with the latest published Emerging Draft Neighbourhood Plan. Any such representations shall be made by the Steering Group on behalf of the Forum. Individual Forum Members may comment on planning applications, but not in the name of the Forum.

Dissolution of the Neighbourhood Forum

24. The Steering Group may propose to the Forum that it be dissolved before its duration, with the approval of the Steering Group. Any proposal by the Steering Group to dissolve the Forum before its duration shall be accompanied by the accounts of the Forum and a proposed distribution of any remaining funds / assets held by the Forum to its Affiliated Organisations.
25. Proposals to dissolve the Forum shall be approved or rejected by the Forum, and be carried out in accordance with Section 12 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.

General provisions

Conflict of terms

26. In the event of any inconsistency or conflict between this annex and the Constitution, the Constitution shall prevail.

Conflicts of interest

27. All Forum Officers and Steering Group Members shall strive to avoid any conflict of interest between the interests of the Forum on the one hand, and personal, professional, and business interests on the other. This includes avoiding actual conflicts of interest as well as the perception of conflicts of interest.
28. Each Forum Officer and Steering Group Member shall make a full, written disclosure of interests, such as relationships, and posts held, that could potentially result in a conflict of interest. This written disclosure shall be updated as appropriate, and made available to all Forum Officers and Steering Group Members.
29. In the course of meetings or activities, Forum Officers and Steering Group Members will disclose any interests in a transaction or decision where there may be a conflict between the Forum's best interests and the Forum Officer's and Steering Group Member's best interests, or a conflict between the best interests of two organisations that the Forum Officers or Steering Group Member is involved with. In such instances, Forum Officers or Steering Group Members shall excuse themselves from any reporting, discussions and vote on the matter that gave rise to the potential conflict of interest and, if necessary, from the meeting, or applicable part thereof.
30. The Steering Group shall maintain and make publicly available a document providing further guidance on Conflicts of Interest, which shall be in accordance with this Constitution and its annex(es).

Equalities monitoring data

31. After a change in the composition of the Steering Group, the Membership Secretary shall invite Steering Group Members to provide equalities monitoring data, to be made publicly available on an aggregated and anonymised basis whereby no individual Steering Group Member can be identified.

Complaints against Forum Members

32. The Chair of the Forum, Membership Secretary, and Head of the Steering Group shall together consider complaints made by any person that a Forum Member:
 - a. has refused or neglected to comply with a provision or provisions of this Constitution or its annex(es), or;
 - b. has wilfully acted in a manner prejudicial to the interests of the Forum
33. In the event of a complaint about a Forum Member, the member concerned shall be informed, and given an opportunity to be heard. If the complaint is upheld, the forum member will be unable to participate in any active work of the forum for a fixed period of no longer than six months, during which time the forum member will retain voting rights at Full Forum Meetings.
34. If the complaint concerns the Chair of the Forum, Membership Secretary, or Head of the Steering Group themselves, then that person shall be excluded from the decision whether to suspend them.