

Wandsworth Council consultation on Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs)

This is a response from Friends of Tooting Common to Wandsworth Council's public consultation on a range of PSPOs, as set out in Enable's email of 18 May, for which many thanks.

This response relates of course just to the effect of these proposals on Tooting Common.

General PSPOs on ASB due to alcohol, and Novel Psychoactive Substances

There are major problems of antisocial behaviour on Tooting Common, including drugtaking, inappropriate sexual activity, fire hazards and littering. While these are exacerbated by the current very serious problems during the summer and COVID, they are continuing problems.

FOTC certainly in general supports measures to reduce ASB on the Common; and to the extent that these two proposed general PSPOs would in practice improve the position on Tooting Common we would certainly welcome them. However our impression - subject to correction - is that the Wandsworth Parks Police already have sufficient powers under the byelaws to deal effectively with antisocial behaviour. The problem is not a lack of powers, but of insufficient police patrolling resources. While the Parks Police do a very good job, their resources are very limited, and are insufficient for the needs of Tooting Common and other Wandsworth greenspaces. While we recognise the current financial pressures on Councils, there is a pressing need for a permanent increase in police patrolling, particularly in wooded areas during the evening.

If, nonetheless, the Council consider that these general PSPOs are required on Tooting Common to supplement existing powers under the byelaws, it would be helpful for the Council to indicate why. But in any case the PSPOs of themselves are unlikely to have much effect unless accompanied by increased police patrolling.

It has been noted as a general point that in principle PSPOs, like other similar provisions, could at some future point be outsourced to a private company, who might then seek to maximise revenue. We would certainly be opposed to this, although we recognise that this is not part of the proposals here.

Changes to dog control arrangements

FOTC are generally content with the two specific proposed changes for Tooting Common ie:

- a requirement that dogs now be on a lead in the seating area outside the café

- to allow dogs on the Woodfield field, where currently they are excluded, though they would need to be on a lead.

We would though note that these two changes are not easy to deduce from the consultation material provided by the Council.

On dog walkers, we note the plan for "a review of the current licensing scheme for a limited number of multiple dog walkers (professional and owners), who wish to walk more than four dogs", and we will await further consultation on this. However we would have strong reservations about any consideration of increasing the number of dogs which any dog walker can handle, given the difficulties of controlling large numbers of dogs, including (eg) clearing up excrement.

If you would like clarification of any of these comments we would of course be happy to provide it.

Friends of Tooting Common
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