



Thursday 27th March 2025

KEY BACKGROUND POINTS ON CREATING A COMMUNITY HUB IN DOWN LANE PARK

August 2017 – Following a 6 month LUOS campaign to use the empty and unused Bowling Club and Green as a community space, LUOS won a 3 month competitive tendering process to take it on. LUOS has had 4 successful crowdfunding campaigns with support from across the community, plus British Cycling, Veolia, Esmee Fairbairn and others, and match funded by the Mayor of London, to transform the space into a welcoming vibrant hub. Also LUOS, with community support, keeps the gate from Berol Walk into the garden closed (until the new hub would be open), keeping it as a valued, safe and enclosed space.

July 2021 – Council and LUOS sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) as strategic partners to work together: focusing on delivering frontline services and a permanent community hub, do joint fund raising and share relevant information.

Summer/Autumn 2022 - Council rejects refurbishment of current Hub & Nursery building and retention of garden in favour of a new hub building. LUOS concerned about high build costs of a new hub, and potential loss of safe enclosed garden space so valued by the community.

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January 2023 – Different options for new hub looked at then Councillors Gordon and Hakata announce their selection of the current Park Depot Site for the new community hub without a clear and open process. Despite reservations, LUOS decides to work with the Council on its preferred option.

Council advises the Community Design Group that **estimated build cost for the new Hub is £2.5million**, but does not share financial costs breakdown with LUOS, despite repeated requests.

After a great deal of work **May 2023 – LUOS submits 7 year Business Plan** for transition to and operation of the new Hub to the Council

June and July 2023 Council's Cabinet agrees £9.1 m for Transformation Plans for Down Lane Park including the new permanent community hub building (also more than doubling the fees for architects Levitt Bernstein from £547,000 to £1.1 million, incl. VAT)). New Hub due to start on site in September 2024 and complete 12 months later.

December 2023 – Council finally responds in detail to LUOS Business Plan after 7 months

January 2024 onwards – LUOS works intensely with Council and Design team for 4 months to ensure internal new Hub design is operationally fit for purpose

February 2024 – New Hub secures Planning Approval from Haringey Planning Committee



March 2024 – LUOS submits updated and enhanced 7 year Business Plan to Council. May 2024 – Council passes updated LUOS Business Plan.

Council advises **estimated costs of new Hub risen to £2.8million**, but no explanation provided or cost breakdown.

Summer 2024 – Negotiations on extension lease and key terms for new Hub lease progress, with positive meeting in August where Council announced contractor due to be appointed, and will start on site in January 2025, completing 12 months later. Outstanding item of extent of and responsibility for Maintenance & Repair costs to be resolved then.

Park downgraded. The Council have also withdrawn the park from the Green Flag Scheme, reduced the hours of park staff, and struggled to deal with repairs and maintenance issues. Over the last 12 months the closure of the nursery and closing off of large parts of the park for works significantly reduced the footfall in the park, and the Council did not put up the sign boards it promised to let people know about the Hub and what activities are going on.

THEN MORE DELAYS, UNCERTAINTY AND MAJOR COMMUNICATION GAP FROM COUNCIL, despite LUOS requestsand despite the MOU.



Eventually in late **January 2025 – Council Officers meet with LUOS to say there will be cuts in the Down Lane Park Programme**, no definite options for hub or playgrounds, need to start again with half the funding previously approved.

March 2025 – Cabinet members step back from support. Cllr Gordon, Cabinet member for Placemaking, indicates lack of understanding and support for LUOS. Councillor Ovat, Cabinet member for Communities, does not visit or contact LUOS despite Cllr Gordon's assurance she would.

March 2025 – Further meeting with the Council, Council restates the same position.

So all the plans for a community hub become uncertain, LUOS trustees and team have been consumed and drained, and trust in the Council is broken.

Despite all the work put in by LUOS trustees and team, despite all the promises to the community, despite the funding being approved, despite planning approval being secured, and despite the undoubted success of LUOS bringing in £4.036 million of investment, in kind funding and social value, including jobs and enterprise.

If something new is agreed, can the Council be trusted to deliver it or will its promises be broken again. If they can treat LUOS what will they do to others /when will they cut them ?