

The locking of park gates across Lambeth was a measure which has been under review for a while as it cost around £140, 000 with uncertain returns in terms of safety. Crime and anti-social behaviour in parks are not deterred by the locking measure in isolation. It also can be counterproductive for access for policing or emergency vehicles which can actively be counterproductive to prevent crime and disorder. Furthermore, there are large parts of the year where the locking policy closed access to parks for many park users, who's only option for going for a run or walking their dog during the winter months is when the park has closed.

As such we are running nine-month pilots of leaving parks unlocked at night. The first phase ran from November 2023 to August 2024 and covered Kennington Park, Hillside Gardens Park and Palace Road Nature Garden. No increases in crime or ASB were recorded during the first phase. Following relatively positive reports from stakeholders and the police during the first phase I took the decision to move onto the second phase which involved Myatts Field as one of the parks in the scope of this trial.

This issue has been looked at for several years and was raised by my predecessor with the Myatts Field Park Project (MFPP). The MFPP previously agreed to the park being left permanently unlocked in 2019 when this issue was last discussed in substance, although this is based on report from my predecessors. A few area-specific factors were looked in relation to proceed with the unlocking of the park. These included the ongoing authorised evening use from the floodlit 3G pitch near Cormont Road. This will act to some extent as a deterrent to anti-social behaviour specifically in the park.

Current health and safety protocols require park workers to leave at least one set of gates unlocked if people refuse to leave the park at locking-up time, so there always has been access to the park through one entrance after dark. Before taking this decision, we had heard from park officers and the staff that help run Myatts Field that during the summer months it is common to leave the park unlocked.

A review of continuing the arrangements about unlocking on a permeant basis is set on or after 21 July 2025 with the Head of Parks, Operations Manager (Clapham), Senior Parks and Sports Development Officer, Parks Engagement and Enforcement Team. It will also consider feedback from ward councillors and MFPP. If there are problems with anti-social behaviour the review can be brought forward, and I would encourage you to report anything which may be at issue.

Best

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