

FISH HOEK VALLEY RATEPAYERS & RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

(Incorporating Fish Hoek, Clovelly and Sun Valley)

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TO: CHAIR: SUB-COUNCIL 19

SUBJECT: FISH HOEK BEACH PROMENADE BENCHES

1. DISCUSSION

FHVRRA and its constituents are delighted that the paving of the Fish Hoek Beach Promenade (FHBP) has been refurbished by the City of Cape Town. The promenade was in a state of terminal decay, an eyesore and a threat to the safety of both residents and visitors frequenting the beach. Unfortunately, the refurbishment seems to have been undertaken without planning for the recommissioning, refurbishment or replacement of the benches on the promenade.

When the refurbishment of the paving commenced, many of the existing benches were in serviceable condition, but they were removed. Fish Hoek Valley Ratepayers and Residents Association (FHVRRA), concerned that the benches being removed did not seem to be kept intact, enquired of both the contractor, Civils 2000, and the responsible City engineer about the fate of the benches. We were informed that the benches would be replaced by another City department, namely Parks & Recreation, which had a budget to do so. Furthermore, we were informed that the new benches would comply with an environmentally suitable design desired by the recently appointed City Environmental Architect responsible for developing a low maintenance environmentally compatible bench design for Cape Town beaches.

Once the paving refurbishment had been completed, it became apparent that the replacement of the benches was not imminent. So, FHVRRA arranged a meeting with the head of Parks & Recreation (P&R). The outcome was that P&R stated that they had no budget to replace benches on the FHBP and would welcome any donations for benches that could be solicited.

Accordingly, FHVRRA requested the approved design for the benches for the FHBP and their specifications and costs. The City duly provided a design with a quotation for benches from a supplier at a cost of ±R12 000 per bench.

Since it appeared to us that the design proposed was far too elaborate and that the quoted costs per bench were exorbitant, we initiated some research into benches suitable for coastal environments. Two options appeared viable; a wooden bench on concrete legs for ± R4 500 or a recycled plastic bench for ± R3 500. The plastic bench is our preferred choice due to not requiring twice a year varnishing, but do need to be the kind with UV protection and flame retardant added. We submitted the wooden bench suggestions to P&R and expressed our concerns about the original City proposal and we received a similar quote for the same sort of wooden benches from P&R.

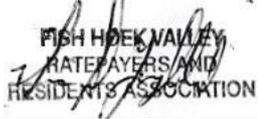
All these queries and statements are supported by correspondence that will be provided if required.

2. QUESTIONS

The lack of replacement of the FHBP benches has caused a storm of public protest in Fish Hoek, verbal, written and via social media from residents and long standing visitors, many of the latter being overseas visitors. Their questions / complaints with which FHVRRA concurs are:-

1. How does it happen that the paving of the promenade is refurbished without a plan to either restore the existing benches or to replace them?
2. What happened to the perfectly serviceable benches that were removed from the promenade?
3. How can one department of the City refurbish the paving, claim that another department will restore / replace the benches, but the other department is unaware or incapable of meeting that commitment?
4. How can it be that a purported architecturally suitable, environmentally compliant "standardised" design for beach promenade benches for Greater Cape Town is palpably too elaborate and based on exorbitantly costly (both capex and opex) quotations for benches from one supplier? What happened to the City's procurement policy?
5. What happened to the name plaques on all the existing benches sponsored by residents and visitors to FHBP? Some apparently have been retrieved by Philip Katz, a member of the Fish Hoek community who does excellent voluntary embellishment of the beach area.
6. What will the effect of no benches be on the many local and overseas visitors to Fish Hoek Beach over the summer season?
7. The storm of protest on social media about FHBP benches has prompted Alderman Felicity Purchase to respond that benches will be provided. Does this mean the City will provide them? If so, when will this happen? Will this be in time for this summer season?
8. Regarding donations, FHVRRA has been approached by some that wish to make donations towards FHBP benches anonymously. FHVRRA has also received requests from potential sponsors of benches, but they want and are willing to pay for plaques. FHVRRA is concerned about public liability as these will be used in a public space and is concerned about unnecessary overheads or donated funds lost in the central tariff pool. However, this funds drive can happen quickly, but will the City approve of this endeavour?

FHVRRA needs Sub-council 19 to address this issue urgently in the interests of accountable and competent service delivery, City governance and the tourist economy of Fish Hoek and the City of Cape Town

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DATE	16 November 2018