

Forum Partnership Meeting No. 16

Minutes of the meeting

27th June 2019 – 10am – High Elms Country Park



MINUTES

- 1 **Welcome & introductions**
- 2 **Apologies for absence – VS, RG**
- 3 **Minutes of last meeting – 26th March 2019 – agreed and will be published on the Forum website.**

Matters arising (see action tracker)

- i. Commemorative bench procedure template – JH has reviewed the procedure and it is sufficient & thorough, Friends Groups are consulted & locations considered, JH will sign the procedure written by AH. LH advised the Friends have not yet seen the templates for information that customers are asked to provide, and there were issues in the past with a bench at Keston. JH will send the information to LH.
- iii. Drinking fountains – JH advised that there are 2 or 3 drinking fountains in the borough currently, a capital bid would be needed for a new fountain at Keston Ponds. The Friends said that it would be good for more parks to have drinking fountains as it would help reduce plastic waste, and they could look at helping with the cost of installation. FK advised this would need to be looked at by LBB, *idverde* are responsible for cleaning existing drinking fountains, not the maintenance, testing, or water costs. Friends Groups could look at grant funding to install the fountains, but there is the question of ongoing maintenance. JH advised a separate meeting would be needed to look at the longer term cost implications and will discuss with colleagues.
- v. Quarterly statistics – FK advised that the questionnaires are being put together and *idverde* are liaising with LBB to get a cover letter to address concerns from the Friends Groups. PM and JH are working on the letter which should be sent out tomorrow. LH asked about the last request for figures, AR advised that 21 groups responded, some groups said they wouldn't respond until told what the statistics are for and that the cover letter should address this going forward.
- vii. Go Parks London initiative – JH spoke to the Head of Culture at LBB who is looking into it and will get back to JH.
- viii. Signage in parks – JH advised that a smaller project has been started in the cemeteries, new branding has been agreed. There is no timescale yet as it is a big project and needs to be uniform across the borough. Some parks have 4 or 5 entrances so we may need to look at having one main entrance sign and smaller

signs elsewhere. FK advised that LBB would need to ring fence capital expenditure for this. The information on many current signs is out of date and contact information is wrong if there is an incident. FK advised that people should phone the police if there is an incident as Ward Security are not always immediately available. KS advised that she has called 101 in the past regarding an incident with a dog and they were not helpful. There is no presence from Ward Security in the mornings and the police don't always help. LH advised that the Forum have a document with contact details which groups can laminate and put on noticeboards in parks and he will circulate.

- ix. Church House Gardens pond – JH has spoken to FK as there were some formal enquiries, feedback has been given on the consultation. CL worked with Friends of Bromley Town Parks months before and talked about development but didn't hear back, JH offered to meet the group but has not heard back.
- x. Gates/disability access at Scadbury – JP spoke to AH, the issue is that security gates are a hindrance to wheelchair access. Consultation is needed as there needs to be a balance between security and accessibility, site by site review is needed. JH advised a separate meeting is needed to look at this, and will also need to speak to enforcement.
- xi. Grant funding plan – AR advised that groups need to look at what is needed on their sites rather than trying to make grants fit their sites, it is better to be proactive and look at the needs. A fact sheet could help with smaller grants where groups already have ideas. LH said that they would like to know what grants are coming up, AR advised there is a database that can be looked at when the need comes up for a project or when the project proposal form has been completed in conjunction with the Community Managers. Groups need to tell the fundraising team what they are applying for so that we don't have to work backwards. AR advised that idverde are recruiting a fundraising apprentice who will look at putting together a fact sheet.

4 idverde update

- i. FK – Explained that the teams had some operational challenges as season commenced. idverde launched its new workforce management system at start of season and discovered some assets were not included in the data that migrated to the system. This meant some areas were missed off from the initial rounds. idverde were the victim of several break-ins suffering a loss of almost £30k worth of equipment and several teams were dismissed due to gross misconduct. They have been replaced quickly but new teams take a while to learn the sites. LBB have been supportive and the challenges have now been overcome with normal services having resumed and the summer bedding is ahead of schedule.
- ii. JP – Job titles for the Countryside team have been reviewed, there is no change to the structure but the new titles will be reflected in the new structure chart. The Countryside team are now responsible for all Countryside/Woodland sites within the borough, with urban sites split between PR and CL.

- iii. Training – there is a butterfly course in July, and another 3 courses in Autumn/Winter. Training requests for 2020 need to be considered, LH advised that the questionnaire will be sent out later in the year. Courses this year have been close to capacity and well received, evaluations have been overwhelmingly positive and people have asked for longer courses.
- iv. RSPB woodland experts visited in April to give advice and share knowledge, feedback was good but we can improve in some areas.
- v. LH asked about the biomass project, JP advised there is no new update at the moment, this is in the pipeline for the winter.
- vi. A BEECHE instructor is leaving in August, a new instructor has been appointed.
- vii. KS asked if the team at Church House has changed, AH advised it is still the same team, they are now based at Beaverwood Depot.
- viii. *idverde* uniform is being rebranded to beige/khaki for static gardeners and Countryside staff, and hi-vis for staff working on Highways which applies to most of the grounds maintenance staff.
- ix. Fundraising – AR advised there is a suppliers day at High Elms next week for work on the sensory trail. Kings Meadow playground is ongoing, designs have been completed and a contractor chosen. There is a new application to Historic London for the bandstand at Croydon Road Rec, and another fundraising concert in August.
- x. LH asked about names on the structure chart, FK advised names have been removed due to GDPR. A chart with names can be provided but must not be published on the website. LH advised that the LBB charts are also out of date, JH is updating these.
- xi. Scadbury conservation – consultation has been carried out and a contractor appointed, LBB need to sign it off, then someone can be appointed to do surveys. Fencing improvements will also be carried out.
- xii. A new parks strategy document is being developed for 2020 onwards, the Forum and other stakeholders will be consulted during the development.
- xiii. LH asked about Green Flag applications, FK advised that the sites submitted previously will be resubmitted this year, and we will look at adding to the portfolio in the upcoming year.

5 LBB update

- i. There have been some changes to the neighbourhood management structure, PMcC has replaced JB. Waste management and street cleansing are being done by Veolia, and arboriculture by Glendale. Public Rights of Way are now being maintained by *idverde*, with inspections being carried out by LBB. *idverde* have met all the deadlines for reports & provided everything needed. LBB and *idverde* are planning a showcase event in Queens Gardens and invited the Friends Forum to take part.
- ii. LH asked about the redacted copy of the contract mentioned at a previous meeting so that the Friends will know *idverde* are meeting their obligations, JH advised that LBB are there to monitor *idverde*. LH said it is not to check performance, but to know what *idverde* should do so the Friends Groups don't do it. FK explained that in

actuality the Groups will undertake some tasks idverde are contracted to do. As an example, litter picking is a contracted task delivered through EPA zoning of parks where attendance frequencies vary subject to the zone classification. Any additional litter picking by volunteers are added value and allows idverde to run a lean model providing both the council required savings and ultimately the taxpayer. FK advised that careful interpretation of the contract is needed, for example it says that idverde are responsible for ponds, but this is only when instructed by LBB. Idverde performance are strictly scrutinised by LBB on an ongoing basis, hundreds of public enquiries are directly managed by idverde on monthly basis and third party interpretations of the contract will become difficult and problematic to manage. JH said that the redacted contract will not go out, but the responsibilities idverde has in supporting the Groups will, such as equipment and its storage.

- iii. LH asked whether planning application fees can be waived for Friends Groups, this has been taken up with the leader of the council. JH advised this is with LBB admin before being put on paper, FK has also written an e-mail to support this. The process will still have to be followed but hopefully it will be possible to waive the fee.
- iv. LH asked about fees for non-Friends Group events, FK said that pricing is benchmarked and idverde also attend the Parks for London Events Board. A few years ago Bromley's pricing was significantly lower than other boroughs, so prices were reviewed and better aligned with neighbouring boroughs. Queries about the price for Chislehurst Fireworks were raised with a satisfactory explanation given, all fireworks events require idverde to use a fireworks consultant which increases the cost and as a minimum idverde and the council ensure they cover all costs. The headcount for that event was estimated at 6,500, so at £10 a ticket can generate £65,000, so the event fee of around £950 is a very modest charge. The event also received a discount as it is a community event.
- v. SG said that there was an issue with Chislehurst Rocks which has now been resolved, there was miscommunication on Event App as to whether it was a Friends event.
- vi. LH asked about management plans, PP advised that basic draft plans have been done, and the Community Managers will now build on these with the Friends and Community Groups.
- vii. SG said that there seems to be a lot of problems with bureaucracy and implementing plans, it sometimes takes weeks to resolve problems as communication can be slow. JH sympathised and said that some projects have taken 2 years, and 6 years for one playground. JH said some progress has been made, for example signage on Perry Street for Scadbury Park.
- viii. LH asked about wire netting on board walks and bridges which they were told to remove at Keston, it is damaged by horses on bridle paths. JP said there is not currently a policy for this, if netting is defective the risks and costs will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

6 Forum Business

- i. LH said that the partnership statement and working documents are with *idverde* and LBB, this has been issued for comment and will be reviewed at the next meeting, but comments are welcome in the meantime.
- ii. The budget for the forum has been issued, there is £6,500 expenditure planned which is in line with the previous 12 months. LH asked if there is any scope for an inflationary increase in the grant paid to the Friends Forum, FK advised it is included in the contract at a fixed £5,000 per annum.
- iii. There is an open forum meeting every 2 months, the last one got quite heated, *and idverde* and a councillor have been invited to the next meeting. FK explained he can't attend on the given date and said any other date that week is possible.
- iv. There is no conference planned this year, instead walks have been planned around various sites, which other groups are invited to. There is a possible plan to hold an evening seminar at some point later in the year.
- v. LH said that the Friends would like to be involved with deciding the common plan for benches/bins/signage in parks. AH said that there are currently 5 types of bin in parks which *idverde* are trying to standardise within in each park, still allowing for different styles at some sites so that they are uniform within each park if not across the borough. Any additional bins should be procured through *idverde*, the process needs to be followed for maintenance etc. SG asked about having a document with the steps for different things, AR/AH will look at putting something together.
- vi. KS thanked CL for her help with the memorial bench at the Civic Centre which took a long time, but is now installed and the customer is happy.

7 Any other business

- i. Penge Green Gym has been awarded the Queens Award for voluntary service, which is equivalent to an MBE for voluntary groups. There is a presentation in September.
- ii. PP asked about publication of the minutes from these meetings, LH said they are given to all groups then published on the website once approved. FK advised that names should be anonymised for GDPR reasons.
- iii. JP said that *idverde* will be asking for emergency contact/next of kin details for volunteers on led work parties, this is not mandatory but helps if there is an accident.

8 Date of next meeting

- i. Tuesday 17th September 10am, High Elms.