

Bromley Friends Forum

Minutes of the Members' Meeting held on 17th January 2018
At Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, Bromley 7pm - 9pm

Attendance:

Forum Committee:

Larry Herbert (LH) - Keston Common, Chair
John Cutting (JC) - Kelsey Park, Treasurer
Darren Russell (DR) - Hoblingwell Wood
Kari Silvester - Bromley Town Parks & Gardens
Keith Rodwell (KR) - Winsford Gardens
Vivien Smith (VS) - Scadbury Park

Friends Group Representatives:

Alan Taberham (AT) - Hayes Common
Barbara Arora (BA) - Chislehurst Rec
Brian Street (BS) - Darrick & Newstead Woods
David Judd (DJ) - Biggin Hill
Gregor Campbell (GC) - Willett Rec
Iain Tulloch (IT) - Hollydale
Judy John (JJ) - Biodiversity Sub-Committee
Jeff Royce (JR) - Bromley Town Parks & Gardens
Liz Woodman (LW) - Hayes Common
Patricia Copelin (PC) - Kelsey Park
Peter Woodward (PW) - Chislehurst Commons
Richard Gibbons (RG) - Orpington Priory Gardens
Susan Folkes (SF) - Jubilee Country Park
Tiziana Herbert (TH) - Keston Common
Vivienne Tatam (VT) - Hollydale

Apologies:

John Ince - Hoblingwell Wood, Vice-chair
Susan Hayes - Darrick & Newstead Woods
Jean Clarke - Kelsey Park
Alan Wilmot - Kelsey Park
Sandy Goddard - Whitehall Rec
Jason Glen - Whitehall Rec
John Bruce - Jubilee Country Park

1. Chairman's Welcome

LH opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance. Members introduced themselves and their Friends Group association.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 13th September July were accepted with the following alterations:-

4.2. Jubilee had not received a grant from TFL as reported but instead the work had been completed by *idverde* though the cost of signage would need to be funded by the Friends

4.4. Willet reported that *they will* be installing a defibrillator rather than *they had*.

JJ proposed and DJ seconded the minutes. A revised version would now be published on the Forum website.

Matters Arising:

2. - Ward Security: This had been further discussed with the Council at the recent stakeholder panel meeting and it was recognised that Ward Security could work smarter. It is expected that changes would be implemented when the new services contract commences in March 2019. Action complete.

2. - Forum document review: The Committee had reviewed its documents and necessary changes are being implemented. Action complete.

2. Strimming at Tree Bases: LH had discussed this with *idverde* and had received a lukewarm response. The change would require Council approval and a change to the service contract. DJ reported that Julian Fowgies from the Council Tree Team supported the change as the damage caused was becoming significant and costly to repair. LH would raise the issue again at the next stakeholder panel meeting.

Action: LH to raise at Stakeholder Panel

3.4. Insurance: Changes to streamline the process had been agreed with both *idverde* and the broker and it is hoped this years renewal will be much improved and delivered in a timely manner. Action complete.

3.5. Training: A first aid course had been arranged for 2nd November which was well attended. Another course will be arranged for late spring. Action complete.

3. Forum News

3.1. Council update

The procurement process for the next service contract had now started and when awarded would be for eight years starting in March 2019. The process steps are as follows:

Stage 1: Expression of interest (now underway)

Stage 2: Evaluation (to April 2018)

Stage 3: Feedback/re-negotiation (to July 2018)

Stage 4: Submission of final tender (August 2018)

Stage 5: Contract award (October 2018).

Some discussion amongst the membership followed and it was agreed concerns about the exact content of the contract and how Friends could have an influence should be taken up with the Council

Action: LH to raise at Stakeholder Panel

3.2. *idverde* update

A biomass project is in consultation and three pilot sites have been chosen: High Elms, Hayes Common and Padmall Wood (Keston Common). There is a new plant in Ashford with ambitious targets for fuel, and they would pay to take wood from sites where previously *idverde* have paid a contractor to do the work. This would mean the available budget can be re-focussed on other sites where work is needed. This is being done with the involvement of the Forestry Commission and Natural England. The members expressed some concern about the use of heavy machinery to remove the wood and how closely contractors would follow the associated management plans for the chosen sites. It is likely that this project will not get the green light until the autumn season as contracts are not yet in place and the spring season will soon be upon us.

LH reported that a Biodiversity Buzz blog has been started on the *idverde* website (see BUZZ page) to put out strategic updates. There are a few entries online already and this will be updated monthly.

idverde are actively recruiting another Community Team Leader for their Countryside neighbourhood.

There have been three Green Flag successes this year, South Hill Wood, Chislehurst Recreation Ground, and Keston Common. *idverde* aim to resubmit these this year, and have a provisional list of 3 more – Queens Gardens, Chislehurst Commons, and Biggin Hill Rec. Management plans are being finalised and will be submitted by the end of January.

idverde's public activities brochure for spring/summer 2018 at BEECHE has been launched and LH distributed copies to the members present. Any Group wishing to have its own stock for their information centre should contact their Community Manager.

Two major events are being planned - 1) a Homes and Gardens Event at Norman Park and 2) a Children's Festival at Crystal Palace Park. Forum have asked *idverde* to suggest to organisers when hosting events in our parks that they offer a stall to the local Friends Group and/or make some form of donation to support them.

The Forum Constitution updates have been discussed at length with both *idverde* and the Council. Some concerns were raised but all of these have now been resolved and agreed. A new version is to be issued to members for ratification at an EGM in March 2018.

Action: LH to organise

3.3. Annual Statistics

LH presented the current information on Friends Groups annual statistics returns. Some 27 Groups out of 46 had replied and this showed some 35,650 hours of effort had been expended and £144k in funds raised. It was hoped to extend this data with a further seven or so active groups to give as clear a picture as possible of the work and efforts of the volunteers.

3.4. Training

LH reported that *idverde* had completed a Living Hedge Laying Course yesterday (Jan 16th) and that a Facebook course is being arranged for 27th. The questionnaire for 2018 had been sent to all Friends Groups but to date only 6 completed returns had been received. It is hoped more will be sent in by the end of the month deadline.

3.5. Biodiversity Report

Rare and Declining Species

JJ reported to the meeting her work within the biodiversity partnership. The partnership meets every three months to discuss a variety of pertinent topics. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 14th May 2018. The partnership can be contacted on bromleybiodiversity@gmail.com.

A sub-committee of the partnership has produced a number of posters of rare and declining species, asking members of the public to report any sightings. This process will be repeated this year though the actual species covered may vary depending on outcomes. See the attached report for further details.

Swift Survey

The RSPB Bromley Local Group is running a Bromley Swift Survey between May and July this year to find out where they are still nesting. We need to find this out quickly so that action to provide nesting spaces can be targeted in the right areas. See the attached report for further details

Magnificent Meadows (Sat 7th July)

The biodiversity sub-group would like to promote this event which could be a good way of involving families in looking at the beauty and importance of meadows. Plantlife suggest holding the event on or close to National Meadows Day which will take place the first weekend of July 2018. For more information see www.magnificentmeadows.org.uk

3.6. 2018 Calendar / Conference

LH distributed the Forum calendar for 2018. The Conference date is now Thursday 24th May. Members were asked for their views on speakers/workshops for the conference agenda. Suggested topics included 'Keep Britain Tidy'; 'National Scene'; 'NCVO'; 'Invertebrates' and 'How to conduct surveys'. PW reminded the meeting of the event 'Celebrating London Parks' on 26th January and the opportunity to exchange views and network. It was proposed that Forum invites Groups from other boroughs to their conference.

Action: Forum to discuss plans in committee

4. Volunteer Development Plan

DR reported that two recent meetings had been held, and the plan has now been finalised and issued to LBB. A volunteer-run task force will be created along with a Volunteer Champion to link with other groups. A role specification will be created, and consideration given to putting the person selected on a volunteer management course. This can be advertised on the community links newsletter, and Jackie Baxter at LBB will help link up with the Street Friends and Snow Friends.

The task force will be used to share ideas, but is short on people to push these forward. People with capacity to contribute are needed. We will look at the Volunteer Champion role in more detail and have signed up to membership of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) to assist.

Volunteer Week will be held during the week 1st-7th June 2018.

5. Friends Groups' Issues

5.1. Bromley Town Parks

JR reported that the dangerous fence reported last time is still there and no progress had been made. He also referred to an article in the Newsshopper about installing CCTV. It's unlikely to proceed. The structure of the Darwin Bed at Queens Gardens has been removed as it was falling apart, idverde have previously tried to repair this in the past and The Glades had said they would contribute, but have not responded since. The bed will be replanted in accordance with the original Darwin plan. The planning application at Library Gardens is on-going and latest detail awaited.

5.2. Scadbury Park

VS reported that they were looking at producing a strategic plan for Scadbury but as yet little progress had been made.

5.3. Priory Gardens

RG reported that there was now water in the pond.

5.4. Jubilee Country Park

SF reported that the wheelchair friendly pathway was yet to be finished.

5.5. Willet Rec

GC reported that new trees had been planted but instead of watering pipes being installed at the same time the new hippo bag system had been employed. This appeared to be next to useless as a watering system and the trees had not survived.

5.6. Chislehurst & Walden Rec

Work has started on the entrance to Chislehurst Rec, idverde are working with the Friends to put in a formal structure which will be planted by the end of the year.

5.7. Hollydale Open Space

IT reported that the fallen trees/fencing has not yet been addressed. Hollydale had received a delivery of shrubs from idverde though it was left to the Friends to plant them.

5.8. Hayes Common

AT/LW reported that the large willow tree has been blown down in Knoll Park and as yet not received any attention.

5.9. Darrick & Newstead Woods

BS reported that they had tried to close the bridleways down as they were overgrown and in a state of dis-repair but Bromley had not acted on it. Indeed they had received an objection from the Bridleways Association. Problem is there are no funds and to re-instate them would require a large amount of effort and money.

6. AOB

- 6.1.** LH asked the meeting on their views of a signing-in register when commencing an activity work session. DR indicated that idverde may be forced to change policies following an incident at one of their sites and that the Health & Safety aspects of leading a Group may need to be more tightly controlled. DJ added that the insurance policy required Groups to keep records of attendance and use of risk assessments so most of the above should by and large already be in place.
- 6.2.** JJ requested that hedgerow posters are used again this spring as it is important to carry on looking after these and explaining their management. Many rare and declining species in Bromley depend on them. If you haven't a poster, they are available on the Friends Forum website under biodiversity, useful documents.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next Forum Members' Meeting will be on Wednesday 14th March 2018, at the Civic Centre. This will follow a short EGM, held on the same evening, to vote on the new version of the Forum Constitution.