

Bromley Friends Forum

Minutes of the Members' Meeting held on 18th September 2018
At Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, Bromley 7pm - 9pm

Attendance:

Forum Committee:

Larry Herbert (LH) - Keston Common, Chair
John Ince (JI) - Hoblingwell Wood, Vice-chair
John Cutting (JC) - Kelsey Park, Treasurer
Kari Silvester (KS) - Bromley Town Parks & Gardens
Darren Russell (DR) - Hoblingwell Wood

Friends Group Representatives:

Alan Francis (AF) - Willett Rec
Allan Tabraham (AT) - Hayes Common
Barbara Arora (BA) - Chislehurst & Walden Rec
Brian Street (BS) - Darrick & Newstead Woods
Chris O'Shaughnessy (CO) - Cator Park & Alexandra Rec
Colleen Meredith (CM) - Cator Park & Alexandra Rec
David Judd (DJ) - Biggin Hill
Gwyneth Hudson (GH) - Pratts Bottom
Helen Parker (HP) - Cator Park & Alexandra Rec
Hilary Titheridge (HT) - Tugmutton
Jason Glen (JG) - Whitehall Rec
Jean Clark (JCI) - Kelsey Park
Jennie Randall (JRa) - Jubilee Country Park
Judy John (JJ) - Biodiversity Sub-Committee
Jeff Royce (JR) - Bromley Town Parks & Gardens
Liz Woodman (LW) - Hayes Common
Mike Titheridge (MT) - Tugmutton
Patricia Copelin (PC) - Kelsey Park
Peter Hudson (PH) - Pratts Bottom
Peter Woodward (PW) - Chislehurst Commons
Richard Gibbons (RG) - Orpington Priory Gardens
Sandy Goddard (SG) - Whitehall Rec
Susan Folkes (SF) - Jubilee Country Park
Tiziana Herbert (TH) - Keston Common

Apologies:

Keith Rodwell - Winsford Gardens, Forum Committee

Vivien Smith - Scadbury Park, Forum Committee

Alan Wilmot - Kelsey Park

Emma Prescott - Havelock Rec

Gregor Campbell - Willett Rec

Iain Tulloch - Hollydale

John Bruce - Jubilee Country Park

Kerry Hood - Havelock Rec

Vivienne Tatam - Hollydale

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 18th July were accepted with the following alteration:

5.5 The dog show referred to was held post the meeting not before.

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

Matters Arising:

4.2. Conference proposals: No progress at this stage and will be followed up later in the year. Action continues. **Action: LH to progress**

5.5 Planning permission for storage unit: LH had discussed the matter with both the Council and *idverde* and believed there was precedence that this should not be charged. This has been left with Cator Park and assumed to be resolved. It will be revisited if further complications arise. Action complete.

7.9. Parks health App: A commercial version of this was still awaited. This would be clarified further once formal announcements were made. Action complete.

3. Forum News

3.1. Council update

LH reported that there was a stakeholder panel meeting held in early July and that draft minutes for that meeting had just been published. Key topics under discussion included the following:

Environmental Services Contract: Decision expected next month in October. Forum very keen that this remains with *idverde* but not given any opportunity to influence the outcome. Sue Holland (*idverde*) has indicated that should they not win the contract some form of tupe arrangement of staff may come into force. Not clear how this could be possible as *idverde*, as a commercial company, may wish to retain its staff for other contracts around the UK.

Grass Verges: TFL managed roads had seen a distinct lack of cutting this past summer. This had resulted in some interesting effects and as a result LBB will be revisiting the schedule to see if appropriate alterations can be implemented for future years. Thereby making cost savings but at the same time ensuring safety and site lines were adhered to.

Allotments: The Allotments Federation were deeply concerned that LBB were dragging the feet re the renewal of leases and fear is that they plan to sell off all the Borough's allotments for development.

Fly-tipping: The guidance protocol of how to handle fly-tips is still awaited. If members have concern they should address these to Toby Smith, the Council's enforcement manager.

Grass strimming at base of trees: This is being discussed with *idverde* and it is hoped an accommodation can be reached. SG reported that a trial was taking place in Whitehall Rec and this seemed to be working well.

DR reported that there was a need to push Council to audit dog walkers, trainers, film crews etc. (those carrying out a business in our parks) to ensure they were properly licensed, had insurance and generally took responsibility for what they were doing. Forum to raise matter with the Council.

Action: Forum

3.2. *idverde* update

LH reported that the Biomass pilot project reported in the January meeting had taken a step back as access issues with large transport vehicles had major implications for the contractors. Negotiations to look at alternative options were continuing but a final decision was yet to be taken. If matters proceed it is expected that Padmall Wood in Keston would be involved this autumn/winter but High Elms and Hayes would remain on the back-burner

idverde hoped to have in place a management plan for every site by the time of contract renewal in April 2019.

Angela Wood, who oversees Darrick Wood and Biggin Hill, would soon be on maternity leave but intended to return to work as soon as she could.

LH wished to thank *idverde* for their support and effort in achieving six green Flags for Bromley's parks. These included the three from last year, Chislehurst & Walden Rec, South Hill Wood and Keston Common plus three new for this year, Chislehurst Commons, Queens Gardens and Biggin Hill Rec. It is anticipated this will be expanded in future years.

DR requested that all un-authorized notices including those of dog-walkers be removed from notice boards in parks.

3.3. Traveller Incursions

AF reported that 60+ traveller caravans had descended on the Petts Wood area and as police wanted them off the public streets they had come on to Willett Rec. The Friends took the decision to offer them access to water and believe this helped save their toilets from vandalism. The caravans invaded their cricket pitch area but fortunately due to the hot dry summer the ground was extremely hard and suffered relatively little damage.

Further discussion about other Friends Groups' experience with the travellers followed and recording the large number of parks and sports facilities that had been affected. Mention was made of installing height barriers and/or posts but in the main it was agreed these were not helpful as they had the potential to impede emergency vehicles. Special padlock could be employed that make the use of bolt cutters redundant.

Thanks go to the Council for their swift response to the situation and for securing a three month high court injunction which could result in the seizure of assets and imprisonment if travellers attempt to encamp on our parks and are hence deemed to be in contempt of court. It is hoped that this temporary order can be extended to at least three years.

Thanks also goes to idverde for their efforts in the tidy-up process and ensuring our parks were returned and secured to their former state.

3.4. Depot Closures

Following the meeting in July a number of Friends Group members have expressed considerable concern at the prospect of some of the depot closures, as outlined in Council documents ES17088 and ES18032. In particular the potential closure of both High Elms Lodge and Den Barn are seen as sending a very negative message to the Friends, especially those serving the southern part of the borough.

The merits and functionality of these two sites are outlined in the attached document and it can not be emphasised enough the importance of retaining their use to manage the parks and green spaces in the area.

Members of the meeting continued to debate the subject and a unanimous decision was taken that Forum should write to Council members and persuade them to alter their thinking.

Action: LH

At the same time it was agreed that Members could write to their Ward Councillors to express their views and hopefully add momentum to the concerns.

3.5. Training

LH reported that a First Aid course is planned for Saturday 3rd November, to be held at BEECHE. Places are still available though of course final numbers are limited.

Discussions with idverde over their training provision for this year remain on-going. Unfortunately the hot summer weather has had an effect on what can be offered, as too the change amongst the tree team. It is hoped hedge-laying courses (both dead and live) can be offered in the Autumn.

CO asked if a level 2 Food Hygiene & Safety course could be provided as Friends of Cator would find holding the relevant certification certificate an advantage when organising some of their park events. LH said that Forum would look into this and see what could be offered. PW suggested that details of courses and associated information should be added to the Forum website.

Action: Forum

3.6. Biodiversity Report

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 21st January 2019. The partnership can be contacted on bromleybiodiversity@gmail.com.

A sub-committee of the partnership has been working hard behind the scenes and their quarterly report accompanies these minutes.

4. AOB

- 4.1. SF informed the meeting that Jubilee Country Park had implemented the first stage of their digital nature trail. This had been a collaboration with pupils from Bromley High School. A celebratory opening event is being organised for Friday 12th October, starting at 4pm, Everyone welcome.
- 4.2. CO reported that their Group had received less than clear information from *idverde* and that it wasn't always possible to know what was the correct answer. LH was disappointed to hear this and would take the matter up with *idverde* management when then next met.

Action: LH
- 4.3. SG raised similar concerns that it was difficult to know who to contact with regard specific items of business. For example if her Group wanted a new pathway or a new piece of play equipment who exactly should they contact.

5. Date of Next Meeting

The next Forum Meeting will be our AGM on Wednesday 21st November, starting at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber of the Bromley Civic Centre. Drinks and nibbles will be provided from around 8pm onwards. The next Forum Members' Meeting will be scheduled for mid January 2019 and will be confirmed in due course.