

Bromley Friends Forum

Minutes of the Members' Meeting held on 18th July 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
Darren Russell (DR) - Hoblingwell Wood

Friends Group Representatives:

Alan Francis (AF) - Willett Rec
Iain Tulloch (IT) - Hollydale
Judy John (JJ) - Biodiversity Sub-Committee
Jeff Royce (JR) - Bromley Town Parks & Gardens
Martin Stone (MS) - Darrick & Newstead Wood
Millie Knights (MK) - Cator Park & Alexandra Rec
Peter Hudson (PH) - Pratts Bottom
Peter Woodward (PW) - Chislehurst Commons
Tiziana Herbert (TH) - Keston Common
Vivienne Tatam (VT) - Hollydale

Apologies:

Kari Silvester - Bromley Town Parks & Gardens
Keith Rodwell - Winsford Gardens
Vivien Smith - Scadbury Park
Alan Wilmot - Kelsey Park
Alison Stammers - Chislehurst & Walden Rec
John Bruce - Jubilee Country Park
Gregor Campbell (GC) - Willett Rec
David Judd - Biggin Hill
Brian Street - Darrick & Newstead Woods
Richard Gibbons (RG) - Orpington Priory Gardens
Sandy Goddard - Whitehall Rec
Zara Jolly - 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 14th March were accepted with no alterations.

JR proposed and PW seconded the minutes. The version would now be published on the Forum website.

Matters Arising:

2. Strimming at Tree Bases: LH raised the issue with *idverde* and they accepted that it was a training issue and that some of their operatives had made mistakes in the past. They will endeavour to improve the situation and are open to discussion with Friends Groups as to how best to manage their trees in their park, provided any subsequent work arrangements resulted in a cost neutral outcome. Action complete.

This raised further discussion within the meeting around tree stumps being cut at unusually high levels. This could be for biodiversity reasons or for future reference where the tree stumps will be re-cut and treated or removed entirely with winches etc. It was agreed that groups should discuss these matters with their Community Managers to ascertain the exact reasons why.

5. GDPR: LH had discussed the matter with both the Council and *idverde*. They have both stated their individual positions albeit not necessarily widely publicised. *idverde* added that it was considered sufficient to adopt and circulate a simple Privacy Policy setting out what data is collected and how it was used and secured. LH reminded the meeting that it was advisable that when Groups emailed their entire membership that they did so under a Bcc banner. This would avoid open propagation of email addresses when individual members replied under the Reply-all feature. Action complete.

7.9. Pratts Bottom Event: This was clarified with *idverde* and the event proceeded with no admin costs to the Group. Action complete.

3. Adoption of the Forum Constitution

LH presented the latest revision of the Forum Constitution and the amendments that had been made since the March EGM. PW expressed his reasons why clause 5.1.4 did not sit well within the Constitution and his concern that monies donated by the public would be used for other matters other than those defined in the aims and objectives of Forum.

Further discussion by members ensued with differing opinions being expressed. The Committee members were firmly of the belief that the clause better clarified the use of Forum income and was a sensible addition to the Constitution

The Committee had spent a long time on the proposed revision and felt that a rejection at this stage would imply a vote of no confidence in its ability to run Forum. At this point it was agreed to hold a vote, the result of which was as follows: 8 votes in favour and 1 vote in abstention. The Constitution version 4, dated July 2018 is therefore agreed and would be issued and posted onto the Forum website.

4. Forum News

4.1. *idverde*/Council update

There have been a number of staffing changes in recent weeks of which key are the following:

- James Hilsden has replaced Robert Schrembi at the Council and was now fully up-to-steam.
- Julian Fowgies from the tree team is due to leave the Council in August. It is expected that Hugh Chapman will take over his role and that someone new will be recruited to do the admin side of the role.
- Craig Langford is moving departments within *idverde* and his position has been taken over by Martin Walker. They will be working together for the next month or so whilst Martin learns 'on the job'.
- Richard Foster has left *idverde* and his role taken over by Chris Williams.
- Alastair Ing has left *idverde*. His position remains vacant at the moment.

RG wished to inform Friends Groups of the meetings the Council had held to discuss the future strategy of their various depots. This involved some £6.4m of expenditure on improvements plus the rationalisation of a number of sites. Sites suggested for decommissioning included: Alligator House, Beaverwood, Church House Gardens, the Lodge and Den Barn at High Elms and Kelsey Park (upper depot).

4.2. Conference Feedback

LH advised that around 15 people returned the evaluation form from about 60 people who attended. Some people have asked if the Conference could be shorter/in the evening/at the weekend so more people can attend. The meeting had equally mixed views and it was suggested that Forum give members a choice of two or three variants for next year and see which is viewed as the most favourable.

Action : LH to progress

4.3. Training

LH has discussed training opportunities with *idverde* and it is expected that they will offer five courses this year as follows:

- A work activity course (to include aspects of leadership, risk assessment, H&S etc.)
- A species/flora identification course
- A tree survey course
- Live hedge laying
- Dead hedge laying

Dates for these are yet to be decided.

Forum will be offering a further First Aid course on Saturday 3rd November to be held at BEECHE. Full details will be sent out in September.

4.4. Budgetary Plans

Budgetary plans for 2018/19 have been discussed with idverde. Forum expects to spend in the region of £7k this year with an income of £5k from its annual grant from the Council. LH reminded members that Forum offers small grants of up to £300 and would be keen to see more Groups take up this offer than in previous years. It is unlikely that Forum will pay £100 to every active Group this year, as it has these past two years now.

4.5. 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 17th September 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. Martin Jordan, who is a moth/butterfly expert, is particularly interested in receiving sightings of the Purple Emperor butterfly which has been seen recently in the borough. This butterfly was thought to be extinct in the Kent area but appears to be making a comeback.

LH reported that the biodiversity page of the Forum website has been recently updated with a lot of useful tips and hints about improving conditions for wildlife. In particular three guides for gardeners were now available for download. These are:

- How to create and maintain a small pond,
- How to plant a hedgerow for wildlife, and
- How to create a mini-meadow for wildlife.

5. Friends Groups' Issues

5.1. Priory Gardens

RG reported that after 38 weeks FoPG have been given a fait accompli for repairs to the vandalised Priory Ponds bridge balustrade by way of responses to FixMyStreet reports. Regrettably the Portfolio Holder has reneged on providing a repair/replacement for the decorative wooden balustrade which "is appropriate for a listed park" by substituting what appear to be utilitarian steel railings. The absence of engagement with our Friends Group since the damage was first reported in October 2017 is most disappointing, and casts a shadow over the Leader of the Council's address to full Council on 16 May which included "working more closely with Bromley's voluntary sector and friends groups"

5.2. Hoblingwell Wood

DR reported that there had been some grass fires at Hoblingwell Wood but fortunately these had not spread significantly. He also reported that a recently installed dog bag dispenser had been vandalised but fortunately this had been found in some undergrowth and would be re-instated.

Some anti-social behaviour had been reported in the car-park area and options to try and reduce this in the future were being looked at. This may involve the clearance of some bushes to make the area less hidden and more exposed.

DR also reported that Hoblingwell were looking at creating a hub for various sports clubs and trying to keep young kids busy.

5.3. Hollydale

IT reported that the monolith tree stump in the playground had now been removed but railings around the pond had been vandalised and needed attention.

5.4. Keston Common

LH reported that a group of travellers had descended on the Common on Thursday 12th July and had been served with an eviction notice on Tuesday 17th. They had left that same evening. A major tidy-up and the replacement of broken access posts was now required.

Like Hoblingwell, Keston had had grass fires on one of its meadows but fortunately this appeared to have burnt itself out and caused only minor damage.

Keston is pleased to report it has retained its Green Flag award for a second year.

5.5. Cator Park & Alexandra Rec

MK reported a number of new initiatives and a general re-vitalisation of their parks. There was now good collaboration with the on-site bowls club, a dog show is planned to be held in Cator Park, and they were looking to create a meadow and seeking best practice advice. JJ offered to assist.

Attracting volunteers continued to be an issue and they were now looking at installing a container for storing tools. They had been advised that they needed planning permission for this and needed to pay a fee. The meeting queried this request for a fee and felt as a Friends Group they should be exempt. Forum would assist in clarifying the situation and additionally could offer funding towards the actual container.

Action: Forum

5.6. Chislehurst Commons

PW had attended the London-wide forum meeting at City Hall and reported that there was a feeling that parks were now higher up the political agenda and concerns about lack of funding for our parks were being addressed. He also reported that the London Network were now promoting the charter for parks and urged members to sign-up and show their support. (Details to accompany these minutes).

PW had been informed of a new app that would assist users in identifying the health of their park and provide additional background information. It was currently in the test phase and Bromley Friends may be interested in helping to provide feedback. Forum to send out details once the app became commercially available.

Action: Forum

PW reported that Chislehurst Commons had an Oak Processionary Moth problem and were spending money to deal with it. He was doubtful, however, that this would prove to be an ultimate solution.

5.7. Willett Rec

AF reported that all the public toilets in the area had been shut by the Council and those in the Rec (which the Friends agreed to maintain) are being overrun. A lot of money is being spent on supplies at Willett's expense. The meeting advised that Willett should apply for it to become a Community toilet and thereby receive the maintenance allowance offered by the Council (believed to be in the region of £1k).

5.8. Bromley Town Parks

JR reported a number of small updates to their parks. Most importantly Queens Garden had been awarded a Green Flag and everyone was grateful to idverde in helping them achieve this standard. Watering of young trees was proving a big problem during this period of hot weather and the hippo bags were not really working as designed. A poo bag dispenser had been installed but JR needed some advice as to how to replenish the bags.

As reported previously there is a major development of high rise buildings planned for the area known as the Churchill Quarter (adjacent to library gardens). This includes buildings up to 15 storeys in height and the Friends urge everyone to make objections on the grounds this will have a major impact on the outlook of the gardens. Public comment on the application has been extended to 30th July.

5.9. Darrick & Newstead Woods

MS reported that fly-tipping continues to be an issue and a blot on the landscape. The meeting advised that FoDNW should take the matter up with the local housing associations and ask them to remind tenants that they face eviction should they be found responsible for any fly-tipping.

6. AOB

- 6.1.** DR reported that he and his team had treated Japanese Knotweed across the borough. Where appropriate the areas in question had been marked by spray painting a white box and he asked that Friends take note and encourage the general public to keep away.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next Forum Members' Meeting is provisionally booked for Tuesday 18th September, to be confirmed.