



Bromley Friends Forum

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 18th May 2016
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
Keith Rodwell (KR) - Winsford Gardens

Friends Group Representatives

Alan Filby (AF) - Darrick & Newstead Woods
Barbara Arora (BA) - Chislehurst and Walden Rec
David Palmer (DP) - Hayes & Pickhurst
Emma Prescott (EP) - Havelock Rec
Iain Tulloch (IT) - Hollydale
Jeff Royce (JR) - Bromley Town Parks & Gardens
Judy John (JJ) - Darrick / Keston Common
Peter White (PWh) - South Hill Wood/Kingswood Glen
Peter Woodward (PW) - Chislehurst Commons
Pia Burbidge (PB) - Chislehurst and Walden Rec
Richard Gibbons (RG) - Orpington Priory Gardens
Sandy Goddard (SG) - Whitehall Rec
Teresa Stirk (TS) - Richmal Crompton Fields
Tony Banfield (TB) - Bromley Town Parks & Gardens
Val Bryant (VB) - Richmal Crompton Fields
Vivienne Tatam (VT) - Hollydale

Guest:

Hannah Owens (HO) - Bromley Council Planning Dept.

Apologies:

Kari Silvester - Bromley Town Parks & Gardens / Forum
Alison Stammers - Chislehurst and Walden Rec
David Judd - Biggin Hill

1. Chairman's Welcome

LH opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance. Special welcome was made to our guest HO, senior planner from the Council's planning department.



2. Planning Applications and Biodiversity Matters

HO presented an overview of the planning application process and how the issue of biodiversity matters were considered. In essence the department is limited with expertise in this area and quite often reports, at great expense, were commissioned from external organisations. The meeting hoped to explore ways this could be improved/streamlined with the help of Friends volunteers acting as consultants over specific local issues.

HO recommended that Friends look at the weekly planning lists to see if a planning application had been made in their area and to add their comments online to any application that raised concern. In addition any supporting photographic evidence that is available to support the comments could be emailed to planning@bromley.gov.uk ensuring it was correctly cross-referenced to the application.

HO suggested it would six months or so before procedures were in place to call directly on volunteers known to have particular expertise in particular areas. She would write to Forum in due course who in return could provide a list of pertinent individuals who would be willing to help in this way. At this point HO withdrew from the meeting.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 2nd March were discussed. VB commented that she was missed off the attendee list when in fact she, and a number of others, were indeed present. AF asked if there was a plan for the use of the accounts/budget to which LH agreed there was. LH stated that there was an expectation of further funds from TLG, but as this was not guaranteed caution in the use of funds was still very much in the forefront. The minutes were then adopted (with correction) and would be published on the Forum website.

Matters Arising:

5.1 - LGS Consultation: LH had written to the Council expressing Friends concerns and after some delay had received a terse reply that in effect said “that it is what it is”. Action complete.

6.2 - Fire Extinguishers: LH raised this with TLG, whose reply was that it's a tenants responsibility and that in effect the Council had done this in error in the past. Action complete.

6.3 - Willet Rec Toilets: LH raised this with TLG, whose reply was that as Willet had taken over responsibility for running the toilets then it was their responsibility to handle the opening and closing arrangements. They would not get involved. Action complete.

6.4 - Signage: This was discussed with TLG and agreed it would be a useful long term goal. It would be added to their action plan and progressed reviewed from time to time. The meeting continued to discuss further options with various suggestions of interim solutions that Friends could adopt. LH referred to a new contact list, which had been published on the Forum website as section 7 of the toolkit, and this contained various numbers and emails. Action complete.



4. Forum Update

4.1 Feedback on Partnership Meeting

A partnership meeting with TLG was held on 17th March. LH presented a summary of discussion points:

- TLG Strategy and Action Plan - these documents were now published and would be available for viewing on the Forum website. The action plan contained a rolling programme of projects, with dates and milestones and was under constant review.
- TLG Website - a TLG/Bromley website was in production and it was hoped to launch this in June. It would provide an interactive vehicle for Friends to conduct their business and generally provide a place to source information and assistance as required.
- Forum Conference - this is confirmed as Wednesday 29th June, 10am to 4pm. TLG agreed to provide refreshments and admin facilities. They would also give an update 'one year on' from the start of their maintenance contract.
- Health & Safety booklet - TLG confirmed they were developing a volunteer H&S booklet along the lines of the employee handbook. It was noted that the employee handbook was being revised and this provided a good opportunity to deliver the volunteer booklet. It was hoped to issue this to all Friends volunteers at the time of the Forum conference.
- Training programme - a training schedule of courses has been agreed with TLG. Forum will deliver first aid and IT courses whilst TLG will deliver i) leading a Friends work group; ii) H&S / Risk Assessment; iii) family orientated course; iv) tree survey / inspection; and v) a mechanical tool based course.
- Management Plans - little progress has been made in this area and the view is that this is not really something TLG want to do. It was recommended that Friends Groups force the issue with their Community Managers and mutually agree something they are happy to work with.
- Toolkit - this has now had a major review and a lot of redundant and out of date material had been removed. TLG had provided updates to sections that had previously featured Council information. Revisions were now available on the Forum website.

4.2 Training Programme

Since the last meeting Forum had run two first aid courses with a total of 25 attendees. A third course was envisaged for the autumn. IT courses have not yet been scheduled though preliminary soundings have been made. It is expected these will be delivered in the autumn.

TLG has schedule the first of its family courses for Monday 23rd May. Also a leadership course was planned for Wednesday June 8th. Dates for other courses are as yet unknown.



4.3 Summer Conference

As mentioned above this is set for Wednesday 29th June, 10am to 4pm. The theme for this year is around families and how we as Friends Groups can engage more with the younger generation. Alister Hayes from the Wildlife trust is our keynote speaker and TLG's CEO will present his views one year on from the start of their revised maintenance contract with Bromley Council. Lunch will be provided as too drinks and nibbles at the end of the conference to provide a networking opportunity. The conference is open to all Friends volunteers (with no restriction at this stage) and attendees are free to join as much of the day that they can.

4.4 Awards for All

The awards for all grant application has been delayed as a consequence of other priority work. A fresh look at the bid is currently underway and further deliberations are needed to confirm it is the right and sensible option for Forum to pursue.

5. Update on LGS nominations

LH had written to the council expressing Friends' concerns. After some delay a reply had been received which in effect stated we are where we are and little is likely to change. Subsequent to the reply Forum had been informed that over 40 sites had made nominations and that the draft framework documents will be presented to DCC and the Executive in early July. Members would be free to attend these meetings and pose questions in advance in writing.

TB stated that their Friends Group had submitted 9 applications so the figure of 40+ didn't seem that significant. He urged members to submit further nominations even though the supposed deadline had passed.

6. Hedgerows

JJ gave a short presentation on hedgerows. In particular how these should be managed and how the use of pesticides to control ground cover should be avoided if at all possible. JJ agreed to formulate a list of Bromley's hedgerows where poisoning should be stopped, via input from Friends Groups. This in turn would be passed to Forum for discussion at the next stakeholder panel meeting. There it would be hoped that the Council contract could be altered so in the future TLG only poisoned the newly agreed set of hedgerows.

Action: JJ to formulate list and LH to raise issue at stakeholder panel

7. AOB

- 7.1** JI reminded members that Hoblingwell Wood was holding its Spring Walk on the evening of 19th May. Meeting was the ruby club in Orpington and all were welcome. There would be a speaker from Second Chance Animal Rescue and refreshments would be available.
- 7.2** SG had met with Hugh Chapman, tree officer at the Council, who said he had a budget for planting new trees. Anyone interested should contact him direct.



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- 7.3** AF asked about the relationship we had with the London wide Friends scene. In particular as we now had a new mayor attitudes towards green spaces may have changed. Forum agreed to keep abreast of developments and confirmed that members of the committee had attend recent London wide meetings.
- 7.4** SG informed members that Whitehall Rec were organising a beer festival for Saturday 25th June, starting at 1pm. It was being organised in collaboration with a number of sponsors and was expected to attract large crowds.
- 7.5** AF asked whether organisations such as London Loop and Green Chain Walk were still active as a lot of their paths were in need of maintenance. **Action LH to raise with TLG**
- 7.6** TB informed members that a walk around Bromley Town Centre, organised by The Newsshopper, had attracted 60+ people.
- 7.7** PW asked about the need for a 'General Meeting' at the Forum Conference. He felt in the light of Open Committee meetings held throughout the year plus the AGM it was unnecessary, though recognised that the change would require alteration to the constitution. LH believed it was necessary as general meetings were open to Council and TLG staff, whilst in the main open committee meetings were not. The audiences therefore could be quite different and it was important that all attendees were kept informed.
Action LH to raise with Committee

8. Date of Next Meeting

The date of next Open Committee Meeting is to be confirmed and more than likely will be in September.