

FRIENDS FORUM OF BROMLEY PARKS & GREEN SPACES

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Civic Centre, Bromley, Wednesday, 15th November 2017, 7pm-9pm

1. Introduction and welcome of the Committee

Chairman, Larry Herbert (LH), opened the meeting, welcomed guests and those present and outlined the format for the evening and explained the voting system. LH thanked *idverde* for their help and support in planning the AGM.

2. Present / Apologies

Forum Committee:

Larry Herbert (LH), Chair, Friends of Keston Common
John Ince (JI), Vice-chair, Friends of Hoblingwell Wood
John Cutting (JC), Treasurer, Friends of Kelsey Park
Keith Rodwell (KR), Penge Green Gym (Winsford Gardens)
Darren Russell (DR), Friends of Hoblingwell Wood

Members:

Alan Francis, Willett Rec	Alan Wilmot (AW), Kelsey Park
Brian Street, Darrick & Newstead Woods	Chris O'Shaughnessy, Cator & Alexandra Rec
Dave Booker, Hoblingwell Wood	Dave Judd (DJ), Biggin Hill
Elaine Blewitt (EB), Scadbury Park	Gregor Campbell (GC), Willett Rec
Iain Tulloch, Hollydale Open Space	Jason Glen (JG), Whitehall Rec
Jean Clark, Kelsey Park	Jean Judd, Biggin Hill Rec
Jeff Royce (JR), Bromley Town Parks	John Bruce, Jubilee Country Park
Judith John, Keston Common	Karen McCarthy, Betts Park
Kerry Hood, Havelock Rec	Liz Woodman, Hayes Common
Lucy Hopkins (LHo), Crystal Palace Parks	Mike Bignell, Hoblingwell Wood
Mike Titheridge (MT), Tugmutton Common	Patricia Copelin, Kelsey Park
Peter Woodward (PW), Chislehurst Commons	Rachel Bailey, South Hill Wood
Richard Gibbons (RG), Priory Gardens	Sally Stacey, Tugmutton Common
Sandy Goddard (SG), Whitehall Rec	Sarah Armstrong, Betts Park
Susan Folkes, Jubilee Country Park	Thomas Thorn, Well Wood
Tiziana Herbert, Keston Common	Val Bryant (VB), Richmal Crompton Fields
Vivien Smith (VS), Scadbury Park	Vivienne Tatam, Hollydale Open Space

idverde:

Nick Temple-Head	Patrick Phillips (PP)
Sarah Hughes-Clarke	Frank Kleinhans
Craig Langford	Andy Hodgson
John Pemberton (JP)	Pablo Abraham
Sue Holland	Penny Read
Amy Rogers (AR)	Lee Penny
Sabrina Taseer	Carroll Long
Nick Barclay	Nigel Russell
Demi Bushnell-Wye	Steven Lofting (SL)
Terry Hollidge	Sinead Pearsall
Benn Louis (BL)	

Bromley Council:

Cllr William Huntington-Thresher (WH-T), Portfolio Holder for the Environment
Dan Jones, Assistant Director, Environmental and Community Services

Guests:

Michael Meekums, Orpington & District Archaeological Society

Apologies:

Kari Silvester, Bromley Town Parks
Susan Hayes, Darrick & Newstead Woods
Alison Stammers, Chislehurst Rec
Emma Prescott, Havelock Rec

Peter White, South Hill Wood
Barbara Arora, Chislehurst Rec
Brian Willson, Warren Road

3. Minutes of the last AGM held on 23rd November 2016

The minutes of the last AGM were accepted without error. The action regarding feedback on the Local Green Space consultation was resolved to the satisfaction of the Friends of Bromley Town Parks. JR proposed and VB seconded. LH advised that the minutes would now be made available in the public domain on the Forum website.

4. Presentation of the Committee's Annual Report

DR presented Forum's review of the year. A copy of the slides was provided in the information pack and will accompany these minutes. Topics covered included highlights of the year, working partnerships, links with other parties and the year ahead.

5. Presentation and Adoption of the Annual Accounts

JC presented the accounts. Over the year Forum had received a total income of £6,750 with an expenditure of £8,285. The over-spend was in part due to the purchase of promotional items but mostly as a consequence of returning £2,400 to Friends Groups for their annual statistic data. The balance at 30th September was £9,321 though since then some £900 has been spent on a first aid course and catering for this evening's AGM. The balance (£8,400 approx.) remains quite large because the committee needed to safeguard funds for future administration and training.

Questions

Q. JR asked if the overspend on expenditure versus income would continue in the coming year?

A. LH stated that it was likely for this coming year, especially if further payments for Friends Groups' data were approved by the Committee. The funds were currently able to support excess costs and it was not the intention of the Committee to hoard funds.

Q. SG asked why the Committee had not financially supported Norman Park with their small grant claim?

A. LH apologised that he was unable to recall the exact details of their request at this time but if it had implied some form of tools or a one-off product support for an event this would not have been supported. The small grants process was for lasting legacies to the park and community alike. Forum would be happy to re-consider an application should it be re-submitted.

Q. SG asked if the 'in remembrance costs' could be explained?

A. JC advised that £100 had been donated to Cancer Research in memory of Alan Filby, chair of Darrick and Newstead Woods and an ex chair of Forum; £50 had been donated to Demelza in memory of Ken Hall, former chair of Hoblingwell Woods.

Q. VS asked why we had had to pay for catering this year when the 2015/2016 accounts showed no such expenditure?

A. LH stated that following the move from Council services to *idverde* the Council no longer hosted Park Friends events. It was felt that some form of social was required to stimulate discussion and that this expenditure was justified. LH pointed out that the income budget included an element for catering costs and that *idverde* very kindly paid for the costs at the Annual Conference (which were substantially more).

Q. JG asked why we spent £1,300 on promotional materials?

A. LH replied that like all grants the money on offer was never going to be 100% and that it was right that Forum contributed to some of the costs. Originally the plan was to purchase more extensive event furniture (gazebos, tables, chairs etc.) but in the end we settled for simpler event support items (banners, leaflets, bags).

The Accounts were then formally adopted: proposed by MT; seconded by AW.

6. Approval of Independent Examiner

JC outlined the details of our independent examiner and his qualifications. Approval and re-election for next year was agreed: proposed by JR; seconded by DJ.

7. Approval of Constitution version 3.2

LH presented the background to the revised Constitution. In essence two changes had been made - (i) the removal of the term 'Nominated Representative', which was overly bureaucratic and difficult to administer in practice and (ii) the re-classification of the various meetings hosted by Forum, which had been established over recent months. LH continued to explain what was meant by 'open' and 'closed' meetings and assured members they were very welcome at all times.

PW was asked to make comment and was concerned by the new clause 9.5 which in his view did not require change from its original form (old clause 9.11). He also expressed concern about the use of the terms 'open' and 'closed' and the apparent commitment to an Annual Conference. He further believed making payments to charitable organisations needed to be checked with the Council.

Some further discussion by Members followed with no immediate consensus as to whether the document was ready for sign-off. LH agreed to make some slight modifications in light of the comments, re-issue the document version 3.3 draft) within the next few days and allow a consultation process until the next Forum meeting in January. That meeting would be re-classified as an EGM for a vote of the membership to take place. The draft version would also be sent to *idverde* for discussion at the next Partnership meeting scheduled for December for clearance with the Council.

8. Election of Committee

PP took the Chair to oversee the election/re-election of the new Chairman and committee members: Nominees for the major officer roles were as follows and all were taken en-bloc

Chairman: Larry Herbert, Keston Common

Vice Chairman: John Ince, Hoblingwell Woods

Treasurer: John Cutting, Kelsey Park

A unanimous vote followed with no abstentions.

Nominees for the general member roles were as follows and all were taken en-bloc:

Darren Russell, Hoblingwell Woods

Keith Rodwell, Winsford Gardens (Penge Green Gym)

Kari Silvester, Bromley Town Parks & Gardens

Vivien Smith, Scadbury Park

A unanimous vote followed with no abstentions. All nominees were duly elected and LH retook the Chair.

9. idverde Presentation

JP presented *idverde*'s vision for 'Environmental Education in 2018'. A copy of the slides will be posted onto the Forum website and accompany these minutes.

Questions

Q. VS asked if *idverde* could source resources to help Scadbury?

A. JP admitted it was early days at the moment but it was likely help through schools could be provided. He would look into this further and see what could be achieved.

Q. VB was concerned that there was no mention of the RSPB in the presentation.

A. SL replied that it was not part of the current team but would be included at a later date.

Q. JR asked about support that can be given to Friends Groups when there is involvement with schools.

A. JP confirmed this would be possible.

10. Bromley Council Presentation

As members of the Council were engaged with other meetings on the same evening LH invited Cllr Huntington-Thresher to say a few words at the start of the meeting. WH-T explained his new role as Portfolio Holder for the Environment and thanked all volunteers for their hard work and commitment over the past year. He then left the meeting but hoped to return answer questions and join the networking opportunity.

11. Questions & Answers

JR wished to thank *idverde* for their recent work, and in particular, the ideas and work in restructuring and replanting the design of the Edible / Sensory Garden at the back of The Bromley Palace Park. This has been very special to many people over the years and needed a lot of work to maintain the planting.

Q. AW asked why allotments were not included in Forum?

A. PP reported that they had their own federation and were represented on the stakeholder panel. LH said that they were welcome to come to some of our meetings but it would be difficult to incorporate them into actual membership. It was further noted that Friends work on public land whilst allotment holders by and large worked on private land.

Q. A question from a member of Friends of the Earth enquired if there was support for forming Groups who wish to monitor water quality at those sites with rivers?

A. The view of the meeting was that this was already covered by other organisations, typically the Environment Agency or Thames 21, and did not really need specific Friends Groups.

Q. AW raised concern that Committee Members of Kelsey Park were reluctant to sign-up to a Health and Safety Policy statement and asked how this could be overcome?

A. Some discussion followed and it was agreed that a Friends Group ultimately had to take responsibility for its H&S policy, as the insurance was taken out in their name. LH pointed out that Friends could take out Trustee Indemnity insurance if they were worried about claims against individuals arising.

PW wished to record that Chislehurst Friends had held a series of luncheons with various Groups and this had been most successful and provided for the sharing of expertise. He proposed that Members visit other Groups from time to time to equally share different experiences.

Q. LHo asked about seemingly different rules about bird feeding in parks and what should the advice be?

A. SL (who is on secondment from the RSPB) confirmed that birds should not be fed bread and accepted that better advice should be published on notice boards.

Q. RG asked if idverde knew anything about the proposed disposal of depots and whether they were happy with the potential plans?

A. PP confirmed that he was aware that the Council had instructed their property consultants, Cushman & Wakefield, to review the use of depots across the borough but as yet idverde had not been consulted on any findings. They would of course be concerned if this impacted their service delivery capability.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 LH invited AR and BL to say a few words about the upcoming fund raising training course. This was scheduled for Tuesday 21st November 1.30pm - 5pm. AR confirmed that it might be possible to hold a subsequent event at a weekend for those members who worked during the week.

12.2 LH referred to other documents in the information pack. These included (a) the Registration Form, which Forum would like completed at the earliest opportunity; (b) the annual data return, which needs to be completed by year end; (c) the training needs questionnaire for 2018, which would be formally published to all Member Groups in the coming month; and (d) the meetings calendar for 2018.

13. Close

LH thanked members for their attendance and referred to the next members' meeting (incorporating the EGM) to be held on 17th January 2018 at the Civic Centre, starting at 7pm. Next year's Conference is scheduled for 23rd May 2018.