



Forum Partnership Meeting No. 32

Thursday 11TH January 2024, 10am – Video Conferencing

Larry Herbert (LH)
Barbara Arora (BA)
Richard Gibbons (RG)
Ralph Ambrose (RA)

Hugh Chapman (HC)
David Braybrook (DB)

Martyn Bradley (MB)
Mark Garthwaite (MG)
Sue Holland (SH)
Angela Wood (AW)
Jess Dalton (JD) (Minutes)

AGENDA

1. Welcome & introductions
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of last meeting / Action tracker
4. Council update
5. idverde update
6. Forum update
7. Any other business
8. Date of next meeting

1. Welcome & Introductions

LH welcomed all participants and began introductions.

2. Apologies for Absence

Friend's Forum: Keith Rodwell (KR), Tony Allen (TA), Vivien Smith (VS)

idverde:

LBB: Hannah Jackson (HJ), Jane Askew (JA), Cllr Will Rowlands (WR)

3. Previous Minutes & Matters Arising (Action Tracker Update)

The minutes were accepted as a true reflection of the previous meeting.

The action tracker was reviewed, amended and updated including new due dates for actions outstanding, this can be found attached to the minutes. A summary of changes to the action tracker is as follows:

Action 24: Park signage updates – **Continued to be reviewed.** AW to share data on which parks have contributed and those that haven't. Propose to set deadline for audit of signage by next quarterly meeting. To then review extent of data and where shortfalls arise, see if idverde staff can assist to fill the gaps.

BA raised query with sign missing at Walden Rec. Will take photos to send across where they should be.

LH raised query with DB - where does this go from beyond the surveying work, are there plans to do replacements of the boards, or is it audit of and stocktake of what currently have. DB advised not entirely aware of what the plans are going forward, DB to find out and report back to LH. LH thought that over the years would gradually replace all the signage. HC added recalls similar question HJ previously answered, yes the current exercise is an audit. The idea was to paint a field picture and then work to prioritise what needed to be done first, and work out where the budget comes from to do that. LH added need to get audit out of the way to see what the highest priority is at that stage.

RA added at Hoblingwell, there isn't a logical place for signage. Doesn't really have any current signage there. LH added should have at least 1 sign if not more, maybe by entrances. RA added there isn't anywhere that states park name. RA advised would be good to have on audit, as should be 6 signs at Hoblingwell but there isn't any.

RG raised query that idverde have said in the past it is the Councils responsibility to fund main entrance signs as outside of idverde's remit and budget.

Action 25: Water fountains – Ongoing. DB advised nothing handed over from JH, aware HJ was going away to establish whether new ones needed. AW added facilities management have been looking into this and feasibility. Have just got in contact with them, site visits to take place with external company for the ones that requested fountains at the time. Not sure they have all locations of where people wanted the fountains. Will be looking for where there are mains water sources for them to be connected to. LH added one site is Keston Common, would appreciate being part of the meeting as aware of where it is going.

Action 30: Website information- Continued to be reviewed. LH advised KR has been looking at websites, he is frustrated nothing seems to be moving forward. MG advised idverde has a meeting in next couple of weeks with the web hosting & design company, prior to next meeting will touch base with LH with update from meeting. DB added some web updates were done in Comms, more work to do on it and have recognised this as one of LBBs priorities within the open space strategy update report that will be going to committee in few weeks' time. Can find out more information as to what the updates were. LH advised was in contact with Andy Rogers, promises were made and nothing has happened. KR annoyed hasn't been able to make minor changes. DB understands concerns, happy to look into issue.

Action 37: Communications processes – DB & HJ working on this, hasn't progressed as quickly as hoped for. Will take away and see exactly what has been done.

Action 38: Friends Group donations from events – LH added this was raised again at the AGM. MB added when the current idverde contract was tendered and awarded to idverde, the commercial offering from the Council, was that idverde would keep events income to partly offset the costs of the overall contract. At the time Crystal Palace Park offered the greatest opportunity for income, however this has now transferred to the Trust. Idverde recognise the feedback, so are looking to hold further commercial discussions with the authority regarding contract extensions and possibly formulating something differently. At this stage, we are not in position to share any details, as IDV haven't had the commercial dialogue with the Council so would be inappropriate to share in Forum at this stage. Are listening to comments and looking how to do this moving forward.

4. Council Update

DB gave an update on behalf of the Council including:

- Staff changes
- Current parks projects – over £500k assigned with the Jubilee Parks Fund. JA working hard on ensuring the projects progress
- Leasing of pavilions update to be released in couple weeks' time – has been trialled at Biggin Hill Rec
- Infrastructure – Croydon Rd Bandstand going well, plan to finish in April
- Consultations on nature friendly verges and sustainable planting are still open for comment.

DB will find out more information of the PSPO signage relating to dogs and the forms that were sent out as requested by LH.

RA raised concern with motor vehicles and asked if signage can be provided for these issues. DB understands concerns, hoped to have found a solution for the long-awaited perimeter fence and restrictors that will help.

HC gave an update on behalf of the Council on the tremendous project including:

- Now in 3rd year of planting, this year 1510 trees have earmarked for planting, some 800 to date
- Planting programme is due to run until the end of March
- Survival rates are encouraging
- Data is being monitored & tracked
- Maintenance season will commence in March, where all trees planted in previous winter will receive 50L of water per week. Currently programmed as a 17-week maintenance cycle, but have flexibility to extend based on weather.
- Woodland creation – met on site with forestry agents to walk around the 3 sites which are proposing to develop into woodlands. These are Edgebury, Kemnal Rd and Worlds End Lane. The 1st draft plans are being developed by forestry agents and have a deadline for end of January, which then will go to consultation phase.
- Cator Park – Friends crowd funding bid has fully funded the mini forest for £35k.

5. idverde Update

AW started presentation by giving an update on behalf of the Parks Development Team including:

- Team/staff changes
- Works commenced on CRR Bandstand with completion date of April 2024
- Fundraising been successful for different projects.

SH continued presentation by giving an update on behalf of the Countryside and Education Team including:

- Successfully delivered 6 Friends Forum courses, looking to put in place more in 2024
- Upskilled Rangers in different areas
- Projects continuing through to 2024
- Rangers & Education Team have started to work more closely together.

RG raised queries on sustainable planting and nature friendly verges:

- how many trial sites are relative to the total number of potential sites

SH advised there was originally going to be a lot more. MB added the whole process of identifying the verges went through a comprehensive consultation process with LBB & Ward Cllrs in terms of which verges participated in that trial. The verges which were finally identified, were following the outcome of the consultation process and PDS committee approval.

HJ sent an email on 11/01/23 to RG confirming the percentages:

- 2.5% of the borough's verges are included in the Nature Friendly Verges trial.
- 10.9% of the borough's bedding sites in the borough are included in the Sustainable Planting trial

LH raised queries on Friends Groups:

- On their books they have 59 groups, 42-45 regularly have contact with. But 12 or so are not heard of
- where do CPP Friends groups sit with idverde, are they still part of the Friends community?

AW asked LH to share a list of the groups as unsure of what ones is being referred to and will try to reach out. AW advised the CPP Friends are now under the Trust. MB added idverde have no contractual obligations over the CPP Friends and would be inappropriate for idverde to engage with them as no ability to support and direct as they are under the stewardship and management of the Trust. LH asked if this is the same with Chislehurst Common. MB advised they are still supported through the Forum and partnership. MB asked DB to pass to HJ to clarify situation by next meeting.

RG raised queries on

- Jade Veronie becoming new community manager, what skill will she bring to groups in her area?

AW advised JV planning to meet RG on Monday at priory. She has been supporting throughout the period, assisting the recruitment process and triaging any issues with the Friends Groups. JV is very committed to community team and has gained a lot of experience and knowledge.

- Outreach to schools – what form does it take, do you approach directly, how does it work

SH added this was trialed last year, produced a leaflet and was sent to all primary, secondary schools and schools which had visitors outside of the Borough. It was a whole programme of what we offer, how we can offer. Feedback from schools was that they had difficulty getting to High Elms due to transport costs etc. outreach is given to schools by email, phone calls, websites and talking to teachers. Can be downloaded.

- Litter – 28% increase in cans & bottles that have been picked up, no sign of improvement, Council needs to acknowledge scale of littering in Borough

BA added seems to be young teenagers who are participating in this more so rather than the younger children. AW added looking to work with the Prince's Trust on this issue and potentially the Duke of Edinburgh. If going to schools, we would say we are able to support your Duke of Edinburgh awards if you want to do volunteering days at specific sites and they can do litter picking at the sites. I know it won't target particular groups, but more students find it easier. Can be challenging but might be easier if we approach them with it.

- Are IDV/LBB liaising with Veolia

AW added a good idea, only in discussions about it at the moment on how we can reach out to community groups and do sessions.

BA raised concerns on Green Flags. MB added part of the open space strategy is to get modern and robust management plans in place, as AW advised we are currently looking on focusing and prioritising those that have a green flag. Also, it has been agreed to do updates on new management plans. As AW said, we have submitted a number of documents. LH asked how many green flags are being proposed for application this year and are there any new ones. AW confirmed Cator Park has been put forward as this year's submission. Also combining Chislehurst & Walden Rec, was raised with last submission, looking into doing that this year. DB has correspondence on this to pick up with AW on.

RG added to litter concerns, different types of littering from different sources dependent on the nature of the sites. MB understands concerns, idverde are not seeing necessary increases in the amounts of litter which is being collected, which is positive as it isn't a growing factor. Have been analysing the FMS data quite robustly over the last few months to identify any associated trends in terms of hot spot sites and information has been shared with the authority. 67% of litter reports occurred Monday-Friday and not on a weekend, may have been a common belief that on the weekends the perception is that the litter service is not so adequate. There is a downward trend and 2022 data was reviewed and there was a positive reduction on enquiries in December 2023 compared to December 2022. Hopefully can continue to see the reductions.

6. Friends Forum Update

LH gave an update on the Friends Group which included:

Since September have had AGM in November, has been a slight change to committee. Haven't met as a committee as of yet, will arrange one shortly and move forward. 1st aid course took place in October. Plans to have 4 this year to make up for those whose licences have either expired or require new ones. In terms of out payments, over £6k to Friends Groups in past 12 months, look to see if process can continue. Will also look at small grants policy with the amount offered. Trying to arrange a members' meeting in March and invite idverde as a guest and members can discuss things directly with yourselves.

LH suggested having 1 to 1 meetings with DB on a regular basis to give more detailed updates as to progress with things. DB agrees and would like to attend tool provision meeting LH has scheduled with AW (15th Jan).

7. AOB

AW advised meeting in place to discuss the provision of a training session to help Friends organise and run an event at their site.

RA raised concern on PPE being provided to Friends Groups on request, have been requesting for a while relating to woodland work, particularly gloves and safety glasses. Have been told that it's a surprise PPE should be supplied. It's waiting on LBB to reply as to what the arrangements are. LH added PPE is absolute fundamental requirement for a Friends Group to operate and should be provided free of charge whether it is from idverde or LBB. HC added if it's specific to Tree Friends side of things, to write to him, as he may be able to help in the interim. RA confirmed it's to work in the woodland of Hoblingwell, wonders who to make contact with to have this sorted.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting date has been arranged for: Thursday 21st March 2024 starting at 10am (Online). The subsequent meeting will be Thursday 20th June 2024.

[Meeting ended]