

LONDON BOROUGH OF BROMLEY

Parks, Green Space and Countryside Stakeholder Panel Agenda

Date and Time: Tuesday 24th of September 2019 7.00-9.00pm.

Location: Committee Room 6, Civic Centre, Bromley

Minutes & Actions of the meeting

Minutes of previous meeting

PMC introduced himself as the new Assistant Director of Environment. PMC welcomed the opportunity to meet the attendees and understand more about their organisations.

The previous minutes from the 7th of February 2019 were agreed as an accurate representation of the meeting with no recommended alterations.

Planning & Biodiversity – Attendees explained that John Bosley had been actioned to liaise with the Planning department regarding biodiversity. JJ explained the origin of the action. IB said that there are simple things that the Council could do in regards to Planning and biodiversity. LH said that some things are advisory on planning applications and it would be more beneficial, in regards to biodiversity, if they were mandatory. PW said that one issue is that Paul Mellor (LBB) is the lead on biodiversity however he doesn't review all of the planning applications and the other planners don't have the same experience and knowledge. JJ said that the Bromley Biodiversity Plan needs to be updated and that she was informed that it could assist with implementing more stringent requirements.

ACTION: JJ to send JH the Bromley Biodiversity Panel's (BBP) suggestions concerning biodiversity and Planning (that she had sent to John Bosley).

ACTION: JH to meet with Paul Mellor (LBB) regarding how the Bromley Biodiversity Panel's (BBP) suggestions regarding biodiversity can be taken further in the Planning department.

ACTION: PMC to add the Bromley Biodiversity Plan to the Development Control and the Environment and Community Services (E&CS) PDS committee agendas.

Fly Tipping Guidance Protocol – JPem updated that FK chased the LBB Enforcement Manager for the Fly-Tipping Guidance Protocol and abandoned vehicles protocol. PW explained that this action arose from stakeholders not wanting to destroy evidence when they find fly-tipping.

ACTION: LBB Enforcement team to produce a guidance protocol of what stakeholders should do when fly-tipping or abandoned vehicles are discovered - to be circulated to stakeholders. PMC to chase.

Grass strimming causing tree damage – AH reported that the tool box talk took place. AH reported that idverde have invested in new City Cut strimmer heads which JH said should dramatically minimise the issue.

RSPB Partnership – JPem updated that idverde produced a draft news article which was sent to Andrew Rogers (LBB) and JH for review. JPem informed JH that some content of the draft may need updating.

ACTION: JH to review the news article that idverde drafted and get the article published.

Decommissioning of High Elms & Den Barn depots – Cllr HT said that the depot review hasn't been completed yet. IB noted that it was minuted at the Countryside Consultative Panel (CCP) that they would be consulted. Cllr HT said that he is aware of their concerns. IB said that if there is any way that Cllr HT thinks they should put their views forward again then it would be useful to have that information. PMC asked IB to send him copies of their letters detailing their concerns so that he is aware of them.

ACTION: JJ to send PMC copies of their previous letters detailing their concerns.

Crofton Woods – Cllr HT said that he believes he forwarded the JJ emails on to the relevant councillors. JJ said that she hasn't heard anything back yet but hopefully she will be notified should there be any planning applications for the site.

Friends Forum Volunteer Champion – JH said that this is a working progress and that it is being considered whether the role could be taken forward by a staff member of LBB with idverde's support. JPem discussed that the role should involve volunteer retention and also how volunteer roles can be diversified, for example, volunteers who focus on social media.

ACTION: LBB to send a formal update regarding where the Friends Forum Volunteer Champion will be resourced from.

Website Content – HS confirmed that CC sent through the website evaluation for the BCBCA. CC said that it would be good if all the bowls clubs had links from the LBB website. CC said that there is a defunct link on the LBB website to one of the bowls clubs.

ACTION: Attendees to send feedback to HS regarding how they think the link between the LBB website and the different stakeholder websites could be improved. JPem said that the group need to decide what should be signposted and where.

Terms of Reference (ToR) – PMC noted that HS had circulated the meeting ToR (which dated back to 12th of November 2015) before the meeting so that they could be reviewed. PMC said that he wanted to seek the panel's views on whether the ToRs required updating. LH said that the panel use to meet every 4 months. PW said that when LBB externalised the service, the Friends Forum told the Council that they thought it was important that the volunteer groups have an interaction with the Council. PW said that from the Friends group point of view it gave them access to the members and the Service Provider in a formal setting. PW said that he thinks there is overlap with the Countryside Consultative Panel (CCP) but the panels have different attendees. JJ noted that the two panels are normally organised close together. PMC noted that the panel had a clear objective when it was started to build trust between the Council and stakeholders.

PMC suggested that the 'Parks, Green Space and Countryside Stakeholder Panel' meetings continue at a 6 monthly interval but that an update is circulated 3 months between each meeting to update stakeholders on the progress of actions. PMC asked the attendees to provide feedback on the ToR and HS will circulate an updated version with the 3 months update.

ACTION: Attendees to provide feedback to the Terms of Reference to HS.

idverde Update

Biomass Project - JPem updated that the Biomass Project is still ongoing however there isn't much of an update currently due to the time of year. JPem updated that work is intended to occur at High Elms.

Bromley Biodiversity Partnership (BBP) meeting - JPem circulated a highlight sheet from the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership (BBP) meeting. JPem updated that an adder site had been located in Keston which is potentially important as there are only 4 in London. JPem said that the adder could be an individual however idverde are investigating how to manage the site.

Friends Group Training – JPem updated that there are 3 courses left to deliver; pond maintenance, coppicing and fund raising. JPem said that the courses have been very well subscribed and that idverde are gathering feedback which has so far been positive.

RSPB Partnership – JPem updated that the partnership was renewed in March 2019 for the next 5 years. JPem said that the directors of idverde visited Bromley a fortnight ago and met with IB. JPem said that the intention is to repeat the visit next year and that perhaps LBB officers such as PMC and JH should be invited.

Job Titles – JPem updated that the following changes had been made to the idverde countryside team's job titles:

- Senior Community Manager is now Conservation & Countryside Manager,
- Community Manager is now Senior Conservation & Community Ranger,
- Conservation Team Leaders are now conservation & Community Ranger,
- Community Team Leader is now Community Ranger,

Urban Parks - AH updated that he comes from an urban park back ground which has more to do with events. Attendees noted that LH represents the entire Friends Forum and therefor urban parks; LH said that he feeds back to the Friends Forum. IB said that the attendees would be interested to hear updates regarding urban parks. JJ said that urban parks have taken a greater interest in biodiversity over the past couple of years.

LBB update

Job Roles - JH updated that since the last meeting Colin Brand had been appointed as the Director of Environment and Public Protection and that the department was now called the Environment and Public Protection department. PMC said that he is the Assistant Director of Environment who manages the Neighbourhood Management services which include Waste Disposal, Waste Collection, Street Environment, Parks Management and Grounds Maintenance, Arboriculture Services and Enforcement. JH updated that there are a few new Neighbourhood Officers; eleven in total. Cllr HT said that Enforcement falls under two Portfolios; Public Protection and Enforcement Portfolio and Environment and Community Services Portfolio.

Arboriculture – JJ said that various issues regarding trees have been raised by BBP members. JJ said that members understand the problems of the tree team regarding lack of staff, but wondered if it might be possible for a member of the team to attend Stakeholder Panel meetings as there are a number of continuing problems regarding trees which need to be addressed. Examples include:

- Insufficient numbers of Native Tree Species being planted when street trees are lost which is important because native trees support a greater diversity of insect species than non-natives.
- The reduction in numbers of Poplar hawk-moth this year has been linked to recent loss of poplars which have not been replaced (parks).

PMC explained that LBB have been struggling to fill the vacant posts in the team as they require a specialised skill set which has been hard to find in London. PMC said that some other London local authorities had experienced the same problem. PMC said that they are currently advertising for the posts and hope to have them filled as soon as possible.

ACTION: PMC to talk to the LBB Arboriculture Manager in regards to attending the Parks, Green Space and Countryside Stakeholder panel meetings.

Attendees discussed that there was a LBB tree management strategy 2016-2020. Please see link below:

https://www.bromley.gov.uk/downloads/file/3334/tree_management_strategy_2016-2020

Feedback from Stakeholders

Bromley Biodiversity Partnership (BBP)

Bats – IB reported that bat box checks in Bromley Parks and Woodlands are being completed in the next 2 weeks. IB said that some harp trapping for the National Small Myotis Woodland Project has been undertaken at Lilly’s Wood and that surveys for the National Bat Monitoring Project have also been undertaken. IB reported that although some bat species populations are remaining relatively stable, the position in regards to other species (particularly Serotine and Noctule) is concerning and vigilance is needed in these cases. IB said that hibernation site visits are coming up for the winter and that there will be a training day for cave ladder techniques that week.

Bromley Biodiversity Plan – JJ said that the 2015-2020 Bromley Biodiversity Plan needs to be updated, which the BBP can action and that they will put the update to this panel or the Countryside Consultative Panel (CC) once finished. JJ said that the plan is a Council document therefore needs to be signed off by a Council officer. JJ said that usually a Councillor provides a foreword to be included at the beginning of the plan. Cllr HT said that JH will help draft the foreword and that Cllr HT will sign it off.

Please see the below link to the Bromley Biodiversity Plan 2015 – 2020:

https://www.bromleyparks.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/BromleyBiodiversityPlan_2015_2020_Full.pdf

ACTION: Cllr HT and JH to liaise to provide a foreword to JJ for the updated Bromley Biodiversity Plan 2020.

Citizen Science Surveys - JJ discussed the continuation of the Citizen Science Surveys which has collected records of toads, hedgehogs and House Sparrows. JJ said that surveys of swift & Purple Emperor Butterfly for 2019 have been completed.

Keston Countryside Day - JJ reported that the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership subgroup joined with the Friends of High Elms to man a stall at Keston Countryside Day. JJ said that the afternoon was successful with the Partnership promoting priority species recording, wildlife gardening and the need to improve links between greenspaces for wildlife.

Linkages for wildlife and habitats and for carbon sequestration

JJ discussed the importance of linking green spaces together as it’s essential for maintaining and improving biodiversity, enabling animals and plants, including LBB’s protected and priority species, to move between areas. JJ discussed residents cutting holes in garden fences which would allow hedgehogs, newts and slow worms to travel between gardens.

JJ said that posters promoting planting small native trees and shrubs in gardens/parks/school and sports grounds this autumn/winter will continue to be promoted. JJ said that the posters are available from the Friends Forum website at www.bromleyfriendsforum.org under biodiversity, posters. JJ said that a list called 'Hedge Plants to Improve Biodiversity' including details of flowering, fruiting times, soil type required is also available on the same page under, 'Useful Documents'.

JJ said that the group are also keen to support more wildlife friendly meadow and road verge management for 2020. As well as the potential importance for biodiversity, there is increasing evidence for the importance of undisturbed grassland in storing carbon (see Natural England Research Report NERR043). JJ reported that according to the UK National Ecosystem Assessment (UK NEA), within the top 15 centimetres of soil, grassland has the highest carbon stock of any NEA broad habitat. JJ said that management of grassland for biodiversity as well as native tree and shrub planting will benefit both biodiversity and also help LBB reach its target to become carbon neutral by 2029. JH said there has been a noticeable increase in requests for wild grass verges.

ACTION: JJ to send HS the Plantlife Road Verges Strategy document which HS will circulate with the minutes.

Winter Talks

JJ updated that Orpington Field Club will be running wildlife talks again this winter on the second Saturday of the month. JJ said that subjects will range from hedgehogs and flowers to wildlife of quarries, slugs and snails and that the speakers are all experts in their field. JJ said that the talks will be held in BEECHE, High Elms and start at 1-30pm. For more information see www.orpingtonfieldclub.org.uk/ofc-tripstalks.html

Chislehurst Commons

Prickend Pond Restoration – PW said that they have recruited two expertise volunteers. PW said that they have recruited some new volunteers with professional skills. PW updated that idverde had assisted with some fund-raising which they haven't spent all of yet. PW informed the attendees that there will be an exhibition on the 16th of November at the Old Chapel in Chislehurst including walks around the pond. PW said that with the assistance of the environment Agency, the trustees removed roughly 90 large carp fish from the pond which were clogging up the ecosystem. PW said that there are now shoals of small carp. PW said that the carp were transferred to a company in Suffolk to go to agricultural reserves.

PW thanked LBB for unclogging some drains which has made a positive difference to the pond. PW said that since July there have been kingfishers on the pond.

Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) nests - PW noted that there were still OPM nests present this summer but significantly less than last year. PW said that the Chislehurst Trustees spent roughly £600 in the removal of the nests this summer. PW said that they are trying to train themselves so they can remove the nests.

General Tree Safety Work – PW reported the trustees budget £10K for essential tree work each year.

PW updated that there was an illegal traveller incursion on the May Queen Site during August who were moved by the LBB enforcement team and the police within 24 hours. PW said that the Trustees removed 200 kilograms of rubbish which was left behind. PW said that the group clear a lot of fly-tipping before the Council hear about it

PW provided some background regarding the Chislehurst Trustees. Chislehurst Commons is a statutory organisation regulated by an Act of Parliament - established in 1888 - with charitable status since 1993. The objectives and focus of the trustees are the management, protection and preservation of the Commons for

the benefit of the community; PW said that the trustees do not wish to stray from this remit. PW said that the group sometimes receive external pressure to take a view on things such as road safety, which the Trustees are very sympathetic to however falls outside of their remit to find solutions to as the roads belong to Highways.

Bromley Council Bowling Club Association (BCBCA)

CC reported that the LBB Arboricultural Manager arranged two LBB Arboricultural Officers to meet him at four bowls clubs. CC said that three pieces of tree work were completed and one was in hand.

CC updated that the Greens Maintenance contract came to an end and that there is a new arrangement in place from 1st August. CC reported a smooth transition and that the arrangement has been going well. CC said that it is a low key arrangement and that either party has a break clause if they feel it isn't working for them. CC said there are some agreed written rules but nothing too onerous as the clubs don't have the resource to manage a prescriptive contract.

CC reported that the Bromley Common Bowls Club closed and that with JH's help, the Hayes, Bromley and Keston croquet club took over the site from the first of April. CC said that there were some teething issues with differences on how the green is maintained and the croquet club now have a representative on the BCBCA panel. CC reminded JH that the actual agreement is still to come through and JH said that it is on their agenda.

Friends Forum

Friends Forum Meetings - LH reported that in recent months attendance has increased to roughly 30-35 individuals at the bi-monthly Friends Forum members meetings. LH said that Cllr Harmer and idverde were invited to the July meeting which was well received by the Friends Forum. LH said that the next meeting is scheduled for November at the Civic Centre which everyone is invited to. LH said that the meeting will include the election of the Friends Forum Chairman and potential key note speakers.

LH said that they have quarterly meetings with idverde that JH now attends and that PMC is also welcome to attend.

Contract Specification – LH said that the Friends Forum would like to have a copy of the Parks Management and Grounds Maintenance (Lot 4) specification so that they can better understand the contract.

Planning Application Fees – LH discussed a planning application in Norman Park that the Friends Forum were going to be charged for but that they believe the fee should be waived or reimbursed. Cllr HT said that he thought this issue was resolved. JH said that good progress was made on this issue on Thursday. Cllr HT said that as long as the lead officer is supportive of the planning application then LBB wouldn't expect the Friends group to pay.

Quarterly Statistics – LH said that 17 Friends groups provided feedback. LH said that the question is whether the statistics are meaningful and how they can ensure that that are meaningful. LH questioned what the statistics are used for, also how important and valid they are.

Water Fountains – LH discussed that it would be good to have more working water fountains in the parks which may help to reduce water bottle litter. LH said that there is a functioning water fountain in Chislehurst. Cllr HT said that this is something that would need to be discussed. Cllr HT said that the issue would be that LBB would most likely need to fund the water supply and that they may not be in the financial position to do so.

Signage – LH said that he knows that, hopefully, a process will be proceeding to attain new

signage in parks. LH said that he isn't sure that the byelaw signs are fully up to date with new information for instance; they don't contain information regarding drones and metal detectors. LH discussed that parks allow different activities for example, some parks allow horse riding and some don't.

Recycling in Parks – LH discussed that it would be good to have bins in parks that allow for separated recycling. Cllr HT said that idverde provided a figure that 85% of waste in parks was recyclable. AH said that it costs more to collect recycling with vehicles with different compartment than taking the mixed waste to a site where idverde's waste Service Provider sorts it for recycling.

Next Meeting

HS to arrange the next meeting around March time. HS said that she would circulate some options for dates and see what people would prefer.

PMC thanked everyone for their contributions which were enlightening.