



## Forum Partnership Meeting No. 19

### Minutes of the meeting

12<sup>th</sup> March 2020 – 10am – High Elms Country Park

#### MINUTES

- 1 **Welcome & Introductions**
- 2 **Apologies for absence** – SG, KS, VS, PP, AR
- 3 **Minutes of last meeting** – 12<sup>th</sup> December 2019 – section 4.2 reference to ‘8 species’ to be amended as we are not sure what this refers to. Minutes accepted, LH will remove names and publish on Friends Forum website.

#### Matters Arising (see action tracker)

- i. Commemorate bench procedure template - LH received the commemorative bench template & procedure documents this morning, action closed.
- iii. Drinking Fountains – JH advised this could take a couple of years to resolve, it has been put to LBB Property but could be an expensive initiative. The Business Support team is working on it and will update. LH asked what the Friends can do to help, they are keen to assist but it could be out of the question due to costs. JH advised it's not out of the question but is being considered as part of a wider scheme. BA said that the drinking fountain in Chislehurst Rec is expensive to maintain by the company that installed it, the Friends are currently paying for it to be cleaned twice per year. AH suggested speaking to Wettons to get a comparative price. Chislehurst Commons are also looking for funding to reinstate their drinking fountain. FK/JH will discuss at the Service Operations Board meeting. Action closed, to be updated as part of LBB update going forward.
- viii. Procedure for replacing park assets, e.g. signage – idverde and LBB are working on an initiative, but this will come down to capital funding from LBB. A brief will be sent to Bromley College for design students to come up with ideas. Cost also needs to be considered, a decision will be made with stakeholder input once we have some results. LH asked if the brief can be shared with the Friends, FK will share this. Action closed, to be updated as part of LBB update going forward.

- xi. Grant opportunities – FK advised that AR will update by the end of the month/first week for April, then quarterly going forward. Any grant opportunities with short deadlines will also be sent out side of this process. Action closed.
- xvi. Partnership statement – JH advised this is part of a wider project at LBB to look at the governance and procedure for the Friends Partnership, it is currently with Colin Brand, Director for Environment. LH said he has chased Peter McCready for an update, an update was promised but has not been delivered, there has been no feedback in over a year. FK will escalate with Peter McCready. BA said that a redacted copy of the *idverde* contract was requested but an irrelevant tender document was sent. FK asked for clarification on the document the Friends have requested, LH said they have asked for a specification on what *idverde* do, and they were sent a tender document. FK advised it comes down to how the document is read, it includes the service provision which related to the previous contract, then the new tender document asks for a more holistic approach, it is performance based instead of frequency. A 300 page method statement was produced which says how the contract will be delivered. LH asked if this can be shared with the Friends, FK advised that it is commercially sensitive as it details the *idverde* service solution. JC asked if clarification can be given on specific items, FK confirmed this can be provided. Performance monitoring is built into the contract, *idverde* are monitored by LBB. There is a grading scale which takes a rounded approach instead of pass/fail. The specification itself also needs to be considered, for example it includes de-silting, which is not part of the contract but included as a schedule of rates item for when funding becomes available. There are planned and unplanned works, it is not a binary document but also a mechanism to capture potential services. KR asked for clarification on the monitoring as the Friends don't know what should or shouldn't be happening. JH advised there are 3 managers and 11 Neighbourhood Officers who routinely inspect all services. FK advised that statistics are presented on a monthly basis, scores are given for various KPI's such as verges, amenity grass, playgrounds etc. There is a system of random site selection for monitoring. This gives an overall aggregated view, and trend analysis is completed to make sure performance is above 75%. There are financial penalties for failures. As a minimum 385 features have to be monitored each month, although this is usually closer to 500. BA asked about lines of communication and how the Friends can feed in, JH advised that LBB are looking at improving communications and making sure all groups know who their Neighbourhood Officer is. FK said that the Friends should email or report on Fix My Street if they feel something isn't being done. RG said that there are problems with the Fix My Street system, some enquiries just get shut down and he appreciates not all of them are with *idverde* to resolve. FK said that *idverde* are working with LBB to improve this, for example many enquiries sit with *idverde* that are contractually with Amey, who are not on the system. A requisitions log has been developed that will assist with improvements.

- xvii. Survey questionnaire – FK said that a random survey is being carried out by post and face to face, 1000 responses are needed as part of *idverde*'s performance monitoring. This is carried out by an external provider to ensure it is free from bias. Results from this are expected at the end of April
- xviii. Tool provision for Friends Groups – LH has discussed this with Peter McCready, basic tools and PPE should be provided but clarification is needed. FK said that Friends should speak to their Community Manager about borrowing tools from the central depot store, there is a list of stock which can be shared. LH asked about gloves which should be given and not loaned, JH advised he has brought this up with Peter McCready and is waiting for clarification. LH said that Friends Groups need the basics. AH asked for the basic requirements to be defined, so we can see how big an issue it is. *idverde* provide bin bags for Friends.

#### **4 LBB update**

- i. JH – LBB are coming to the end of the financial year, it is a busy time and *purdah* is coming up. There is a consultation on Saturday for Hoblingwell BMX. There are 4 big projects coming up: High Elms Sensory Trail, Croydon Road Rec Bandstand, Scadbury Moated Manor, and Kings Meadow BMX. If the BMX is successful with the London Marathon Trust and Places to Ride then building work could start in September.
- ii. Monthly Service Operations Board meetings are continuing as well as Strategic Partnership Meetings, a draft strategy is being drawn up. LBB are looking at providing a Neighbourhood Management session for Neighbourhood Officers and Friends Groups to meet for a presentation and Q&A. *idverde* can also join this.
- iii. The last of the finances for the year are being allocated to progress projects that are outstanding/high priority.
- iv. Coronavirus – the government response plan will filter down to councils, LBB will start a 15 week plan following the government's lead. Updates will be provided in due course regarding limiting public gatherings. LH said that some groups are concerned about their events, JP raised concerns about work parties. FK said that the official advice so far is business as usual, although there have already been cancellations. A mitigation plan is going out today, and Friends Groups should look at precautions for their groups. There will be no action from LBB or *idverde* until government advice is given. *idverde* will look to implement precautionary measures such as working from home, and staggered shift times for staff in order to minimise contact in depots. If a pandemic is triggered then *idverde* may stop grass cutting and concentrate on services such as waste collection & cemeteries.

#### **5 *idverde* update**

- i. Training has recently been provided by the RSPB to *idverde* and LBB colleagues on biodiversity in urban green spaces. A training course on live hedge laying has been

delivered and an herbaceous border course is planned for the end of the month. 2452 volunteer hours were reported to the end of February for work parties led by idverde.

- ii. idverde are working on Countryside Stewardship grant applications as a stopgap for HLS funding for SSSI sites. The HLS agreement for non-SSSI sites continues to 2021.
- iii. Green Flag submissions have been made for 2020.
- iv. Winter woodlands works ended early due to the storms, surveys have started this week for newts and toads, some of these were assisted by volunteers.
- v. There have been some complaints about Padmall Wood tree works, JP advised these were a small number of vocal complaints based on a poor understanding of ecology, the work may look drastic but it is being viewed 1 month into a 10-year plan. The work is not commercially driven and due diligence has been carried out. Some infrastructure requires assessment/reinstatement once weather conditions improve, there is a long term plan to manage the site going forward which has the support of the RSPB and Kent Wildlife Trust.
- vi. CL is working with Friends Groups to introduce naturalised grass areas, some sites have been identified at Petts Wood and Well Wood.
- vii. Friends of Widmore have a work day next Saturday to build an insect house and have a tidy up.
- viii. Friends of Pratts Bottom Green have expanded to cover the recreation ground.
- ix. The big spring clean is coming up, more litter pickers have been purchased for the store which can be borrowed by groups.
- x. New trees are being planted on Saturday at Havelock Rec.
- xi. Thanks was given to Friends of Hoblingwell for their help with the BMX track consultation.
- xii. Trees are being planted in Coney Hall to start an orchard.
- xiii. A cutback is being organised at Kings Road for the end of the month, the area is left for wildlife.
- xiv. The volunteers at Priory Gardens are working very hard, interpretation signs have been installed.
- xv. There is a new Friends Group at Crofton Woods.
- xvi. Murals have been painted at Alexandra Rec and Crystal Palace Park, and a green roof started at Winsford Gardens.
- xvii. Cleanups are planned this month at Blake Rec and Penge Green Gym.
- xviii. The Friends bridge project for Crystal Palace Dinosaurs is ongoing.
- xix. A container has been put in Norman Park for the Friends Group, and benches are being installed in the peace garden.
- xx. Friends of Kelsey Park are working on new interpretation boards.
- xxi. A Friends Group at Harvington is being revived, they are planning a plaque to commemorate the mayoral avenue.
- xxii. There may be a new Friends Group formed for Palace Square.

- xxiii. Friends of Kings Meadow were awarded £50k from a grant application, a lot of work went into this, we are very happy about it.
- xxiv. *idverde* grounds maintenance is recovering from the storms after the wettest winter on record. A lot of drainage issues have been highlighted following unprecedented flash flooding. Despite the weather all the winter pruning has been completed, although grass cutting will be delayed due to the wet weather. Parks are still far too wet to cut, although verges which drain quicker are now being cut where possible.
- xxv. RG asked about strimming around trees, and requests to leave the grass long. AH advised there is no directive for this at present, but *idverde* understand the issue. LBB have advised *idverde* to be careful around trees, the electric trimmers help with this issue but cord is being used for the first cut. JH advised that there is a proposal to leave grass long around park trees to encourage wildlife. RG asked about street verges, JH said this is on the radar for certain areas, but is not as straightforward as management is required, and this would require a change of contract with *idverde* and a management plan. AH said there has been an increase in enquiries about leaving the grass long, but there are a lot of obstacles to consider. RG asked about the draft environment and community services plan, and an update to the Bromley Parks website. JH advised that all websites are being reviewed as there is overlap between LBB, *idverde*, and the Friends Forum. Some changes have been made already, for example the education section now leads directly to the BEECHE page on the *idverde* website.

## 6 Forum Business

- i. Bi-monthly meetings are continuing with the Friends, the next one is on 24<sup>th</sup> March.
- ii. There is an initiative with the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, and a Go Parks campaign to make sure that all parks are registered on there. Not all parks are highlighted yet, but Friends Groups can use the Go Parks website to promote their own groups.
- iii. London Wildlife Trust beautiful butterflies project are looking at chalk grassland corridors between existing sites.
- iv. Training is continuing with a first aid course next Friday which is currently under-subscribed, another 2 courses are planned for the summer to make up for the backlog after a course was cancelled last year. The herbaceous borders course in March is full and a Biodiversity in Urban Parks course is planned for April. There is a reptile course in June, and Wildlife Ponds in October.
- v. LH asked about the parks furniture document at the last meeting, AH will send this. We are trying to keep the bench style consistent within sites. RG said that about half the benches in Priory Gardens have plaques. AH said that sometimes benches are installed and plaques added later, depending on the state of the bench they can sometimes be refurbished and a plaque added.

- vi. LH asked about management plans, CL advised that all groups have them and are looking at adding historical information as well as projects. These are all a work in progress to develop them from the generic plans, and will take years to fully develop. The aim is to keep them as an evergreen document, Community Managers will work with Friends Groups to develop these. KR said the current plans are very generic, FK advised that the purpose was to reach a very basic starting point as hundreds of plans had to be drafted, these can now be added to and tailored to each park. RG suggested the plans can also be used as a journal for what has happened over time at each park.
- vii. RG asked about Shortlands Green, there is an area that the local residents would like to adopt as part of Shortlands Friendly Village. There is a consultation next week and RG asked if idverde are involved. AH advised this is a highways site, it may be led by the Street Friends.

## **7 Any other business**

- ii. KR asked about signage about travellers, JH said these can now be taken down, it was an enforcement issue. Groups should let JH know if there has been any damage to noticeboards. LBB lost their case, an appeal has been made but no update as yet. The usual section 51 enforcement process applies.
- iii. RG said that the new owners of The Walnuts in Orpington have a community planning meeting, they want to make it a greener development. JH said that this was also mentioned at the Bromley BID meeting.

## **8 Date of next meeting**

- i. Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June, 10am, High Elms Country Park