



Forum Partnership Meeting No. 21

Thursday 25th March 2021, 10am – Video Conferencing

ATTENDEES

Refer to secretary for details

AGENDA

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

Welcome & Introductions

LH welcomed all participants. New idverde team members, AH (Financial Administration) and AZ (Fundraiser) were introduced to the meeting.

Apologies for Absence

KS and PP

Minutes of last meeting

JC: P7 third paragraph correction from committee to just forum also a typo (sought not sort)
Action Tracker – due dates where all marked arbitrarily as 01/06/21 – due dates to be agreed during meeting from now on as some issues can be dealt with swiftly.

Matters Arising (Action Tracker Update)

Action 16 - Partnership statement

LH has received comments from idverde and LBB after the last meeting. LH has produced a revised version from the comments. Further discussion is required on the new version. JH advised FK, PMC & JH are looking to review new version and return to LH with thoughts from LBB with the aim of signing off the statement by the end of April.

Action 18 – Tool provision for Friends Groups.

LH has sent outline document to JH – JH has reviewed the document and agrees to the PPE element in principle but needs to consider the tools element further. JH is trying to source funding.

Action 19 – Dog licence.

JH advised that new violations are to be reported via TS (enforcement) who will liaise with Ward Security on behalf of the Friends. It is also advised to report directly to Ward Security number. LH advised this is fine for Friends Groups but more challenging for members of the public. JH asks that they be directed to FMS. LH advised that the notice does not give detail for FMS. JH has will ask TS for a response on this issue. Consideration to be given regarding the way posters are displayed, cable ties are unattractive and often are ripped off.

Action 20 – Crystal Palace Friends – Assistance in appointing new Chair.

PR advised that she needs to continue to work with the group to support them and it is expected that the group will continue to share Chair duties until a new Chair is appointed

Action 21 – Maps for areas varied to be provided for idverde operatives.

AH advised Community Managers had provided maps to the GM team, eventually we will add these to management plans.

Action 22 – LBB to possibly help appoint checker of FF accounts.

LH advised Treasurer of Jubilee CP has agreed to audit accounts – all agreed with idverde and LBB.

Action 23 – LBB to see if they could assist Friends Groups with (online) survey assistance.

JH has spoken to LBB Comms department and they have advised they are happy to support this with GDPR compliance. FK advised SurveyMonkey and Google Forms are free and quite user friendly. LBB comms have advised they can promote any surveys and link with them with their websites and social media platforms. VS advised that the Friends are looking at accessing Microsoft 365 subscriptions for storage, forms etc. There is a cost for this, and can any support be provided by LBB? If not, funds will have to come from the Forum. JH

advised LBB are not able to support this financially and suggested Forum grant money to be used.

Action 24 - LBB to provide update on park sign upgrades.

FK advised that the college has asked to reconvene on this matter in July this year to consider including the signage project in the new curriculum. Item to remain as an action and further update expected in July.

Action 25 - Additional water fountains installations and upgrades for existing fountains.

JH advised that he has spoken to several departments on this matter and has advised that if this project is to be taken forward it would have to be viewed holistically. Waste support the principle of reducing plastics, there may be some funding from the carbon team. It may be more cost effective to put new fountains in instead of refurbishing old ones. LBB's carbon reduction team are taking this forward and JH to provide update at each meeting as the scheme is explored for viability and cost effectiveness.

Action 26 - Requests for more online courses/education for Friends Groups.

LH advised that JP has produced a list of courses and this has been agreed. Next course is 12th April. Plan for this year has been agreed.

LBB Update

JH, it has been a very challenging few months we have been in lockdown for four months now but are operating business as usual, NMO's (Neighbourhood Management Officers) have been out every day inspecting the contract in line with the performance management framework. Idverde have performed well and achieved their contractual objectives, we continue to have our monthly client meetings. Grass cutting has commenced in late February. New C-19 signage has gone up in parks which follows the LBB corporate branding, not new information but branded better with LBB's logo. idverde are focussing on Playgrounds as the weather improves and we move toward Easter. On the 29th March organised sports (football/rugby) are looking to extend to the end of June, this is still under consideration.

LH asked for clarity on the role of the NMO's in relation to Friends Groups. JH explained that there are eleven NMO's who cover a couple of wards each. Their role is to monitor the standard of works completed by service providers and the Health and Safety performance of the borough's contractors. Friends Group's should primarily go through the Community Managers who will engage NMO's if required and keep them apprised of any developments that are happening in their wards. FK advised that if there are any issues that the

Community Management team cannot help with the escalate them to AH and FK who can assist.

LH advised that he does not believe that Friends Groups have any formal contact with NMO and expect that issues should go through idverde. There is a concern that NMO's can make decisions without consulting with Friends Groups, for example filling in a pond without consulting Friends Groups or idverde.

JH advised that NMO's are Council representatives and have a part to play and are involved with the decision-making process in conjunction with the Community Managers. FK suggested that we need to establish a more effective communication relationship between Council Officers and Community Managers, so they remain as the conduit between LBB and the Friends Groups. The commissioned function of the idverde community team is to establish and develop relationships with stakeholders and should be considered as first point of call for DSM's, allotments and Friends Groups.

JH agreed that it would be beneficial for the NMO team to be introduced to the Friends Groups in the future. BA suggested that the NMO role could be added to the partnership statement so it is clear for all and this would clarify their place in the partnership. RG suggested that the function of the park sometimes would change the input of the NMO's as there is more of a street element to them which means he probably engages with them more than a countryside site might. VS advised that the Friends of Scadbury were not aware who their NMO was until recently. Not all issues reported by groups are necessarily idverde issues and it would be useful to have a contact list for the NMO's. JH advised that he will send an updated organisation chart out. JH advised that he is the escalation point if NMO's cannot assist, particularly while the team are assisting with C-19 works for the Council. JH advised that going directly to members can slow the process down and would encourage the groups to approach Community Managers in the first instance and if escalations are required to contact NMO's and then James directly.

JP suggested that the NMO's be invited to the Friends Forum AGM as it is online this year. JH agreed that this would be a good means of introduction.

Idverde Update

CL advised idverde has been giving out some litter pickers and gloves to volunteers for them to keep. CL asked for thanks to be recorded for their efforts. We have recently bought some more litter pickers due to the high demand from individuals looking to help. We have done a lot of work on our islands around the borough, Riverside Gardens has been regenerated by us and Thames Water. Last year we had issues with Swans being targeted at Priory Gardens islands, however working in partnership with LBB and Friends Groups we

have improved the island with new infrastructure and the swans have nested there which is safer for them and the other waterfowl.

Playground opened at Kings Meadow with great success, we hope to have an official opening when we are allowed. Looking at some opportunities with the ECB regarding artificial cricket wickets and working with DSMs to prepare for the season restarts. Assisting Fitness providers with the C-19 restrictions. PR advised she had been having site meetings with many stakeholders and the tree team, particularly at Hollydale and Betts Park.

JP – Brilliant butterfly's project. The background is that we have been working with London Wildlife Trust and Butterfly conservation over recent years on various projects. They spoke to us about a project by the postcode lottery with the aim of cross borough habitat corridors. Four sites were identified in Bromley Coney Hall Rec, Leaves Green, Green St Green and Biggin Hill. Since August 2020, the team have been working with partners collaboratively. It is rare to have capital to invest in habitat creation particularly in urban environments. AJP in the fundraising team has put in a large amount of work to get the project this far. Couple of features are held up in the planning cycle but some of the others do not require planning. It is a complex project due to the unique characteristics of the sites, but we are hopeful to get it done over the next 5-6 weeks. Some of the sites are just a change of management others are the addition of bunds or chalk scrapes, planting and plugging up with suitable wild flowers. Up until this point it has been very much an idverde led project but once the scrapes are in Brilliant Butterfly's will take over the volunteer and engagement side up until the project is conclusion in August, then idverde take it on long term. The team are very excited about this project.

We are about to start an engagement and education project on biodiversity with the borough's allotments this should go live soon.

We are just starting reptile surveys and adder sightings are on the up, adder sites in Keston are up which is unusual as they are generally in Hayes. The roads between the Commons are impermeable barriers to the adders, so we feel the coppicing work that took place in Padmall Wood facilitated their movement from one site to another, the coppicing has created fantastic reptile habitat.

Sheep have returned to High Elms for the first spring grazing in some time. There will be three sheep for around six weeks. We will be doing some communications regarding dog control after the difficulties we had last year with a dog attack.

AW has returned from maternity leave. Countryside sites have been heavily used during winter and pathways are very muddy. As the weather dries, we will assess footpaths to identify what remedial works can take place.

Volunteering is to recommence on the 29th March. Rangers will be in touch to arrange led sessions. There is a staggered start so not everyone will start in the first week, but we are trying to get everyone up and running as soon as possible.

There has been 28 booked on the invasive species course. Education effectively returns to normal bar the shop from next week.

AR additional Fundraiser has started she will be meeting groups soon as she starts to take on some projects.

Scadbury – fencing works around the moated manor has started this week, we also have an ecologist beginning soon to complete licence works to prepare us to carry out the repair work to the manor. We have received development grant from Historic England which goes toward the tendering of the repair works which will help to inform a larger application of circa 90k.

BMX Project, Hoblingwell, we are at the tender clarification stage which will last a couple of weeks, assuming we have the funds we will then proceed to awarding the contract and works may begin later in the summer. This is not guaranteed though as not all funds have been secured.

Also working on project at Goddington, Locks Bottom and Poverest some of which are very substantial pavilion projects so we are very busy.

JH advised that LBB believe that idverde has done well to secure funds for projects during the pandemic and there have been some great successes.

AH advised that grass cutting had commenced in parks and on verges, seasonal recruitment was going well with only a few positions left to fill. Shrub pruning had gone well over the winter and that the shrub teams were currently working on weed control and bedding maintenance. AH mentioned that the winter bedding was now in flower and looking good.

Litter has proved very challenging due to the increased footfall in parks, it was good of the volunteers to help with litter picking and this has been appreciated.

AS has been appointed as Parks Development Manager and has already met a couple of groups. AS will be invited to the next meeting to meet the group.

Event's organisers are booking up parks for dates after 21st June. The events team are very busy processing large applications such are the Wireless Festival at Crystal Palace Park. Please can groups put their applications in as soon as possible to allow us time to process them efficiently.

LH asked regarding grant application procedures and advised that VS had been working with AR to produce a flowchart. LH would like to get to a defined procedure when groups are applying for grants. It would be good to have a standard approach from Idverde Community Team as there has been some differences in the past.

LH asked about the 20 year maintenance costs being asked of Friends Groups for fundraising projects that is to be paid upfront. LH advised this had been a bit of a shock to groups. It is not clear to LH why this cost was introduced in 2016-17

FK explained that the maintenance costs were introduced by the Council as a means of trying to offset the maintenance liability to the asset portfolio, if you introduce additional assets then there is a requirement to maintain the lifecycle of the assets. From the Council side they are wanting to ensure that when we increase portfolio that there is enough maintenance to draw from for future years in the long term. Idverde are effectively deploying Council policy to safeguard the cost liability. One thing to consider is that quite often the Council fund the maintenance element from various community pots.

AR advised when groups come to the fundraising teams they are always advised early on as part the process, it is explained that this is for increased infrastructure not replacement. Once explained to groups most groups continue with their project, recognising that the project may take longer. The money required for maintenance liabilities are often sourced indirectly from Bromley Council's members funds or community funds, the money is held in a dedicated ledger code and is only drawn upon for the site it was raised for as and when required.

LH advised that he has no issue with the fact that groups must provide maintenance monies for new assets that they want to put into a park, the problem really is the fact that it is twenty years of maintenance upfront and that needs to be looked at, perhaps it can be done in stages, a couple of years at a time it would be easier for groups to cope with. FK advised that the reason the Council ask for funds upfront is because there is no certainty on the longevity of a Friends Group. LH suggested that if the Friends Group did not continue then the asset could be removed. JH advised that there would be a cost to remove assets and restore the area and will disappoint the local community. LH advised that the twenty years upfront is still not reasonable and that the Friends Forum object to it, they were not consulted when it was introduced and it has come as a shock to groups, the groups are providing a service to the Council enhancing the Council's assets. JH will discuss this with PMC and provide a fuller response at the next meeting.

LH, getting back to fundraising procedures/forms can we get to a place where we can review that process? AR advised that there is a piece of work taking place regarding process mapping and it is on the horizon. We are hoping to have a version of the process map

completed after a workshop with VS and the Community Managers before the bigger process review later this year.

BA advised that FoCRG are a registered charity and that they as a group are not happy with handing over twenty years of maintenance money upfront. There is no clear accountability for the money as the group do not have access to these accounts. They must have better communication before they are able to commit to twenty years maintenance money. LH agrees that this is the case for all groups that are registered as charities as they have much more stringent accounting policies. AR advised agreements can be reached that can overcome this issue. BA advised that groups must be told about the maintenance costs from the outset to avoid any frustration for groups and members of the public, Kings Meadow said they were quite far down the process before they were made aware of the maintenance costs. AR advised that the earlier we are aware of projects the sooner we can advise groups of the costs, we find it hard when groups have already found funding as we must work backwards to secure the maintenance funding. Unfortunately, the Kings Meadow project was underway when the policy was introduced by the Council. BA asked that there be timelines for projects to be clear. AR agreed and takes the point on board but explained that the team have been inundated with projects, some particularly large projects, the team try to be fair with their time, when groups work outside of the process it can delay other groups who have been waiting. BA suggested that smaller projects can progress with more autonomy. AR advised that the new process map that she is working on with VS should help with that.

Forum Update

LH advised the Forum has had a couple of committee meetings and a stakeholder panel meeting since we last met. The Forum have been looking at the funding issue which we have discussed today and we have also the Open Space Strategy document, the Forum's understanding is that the Council are working on a plan of how to update the strategy and that once the plan is in place that will be discussed with the Forum to move it forward and the forum are pleased to hear that a working party will be put together as detailed in the Stakeholder panel minutes.

LH advised that some groups had asked for the Forum to raise some issues at the meeting Friends of Alexandra Rec have asked for an update on their paddling pool and the provision of toilets on site to proceed with the project. JH advised that idverde and the Council have been reviewing the project and the costs involved in repairing the pool, the conclusion was that it would not be cost effective to repair the site. It was also concluded that any form of water play on site would not be suitable without toilets, bearing in mind the initial costs and the maintenance costs it was felt this would not be viable. We are looking at alternative options for the site and will be working with the group on this over the coming months.

VS asked how has this been communicated to the groups, is it communicated in writing? Does it get closed off properly and can the groups appeal. JH advised that on this project the decision has only been made this week so the group has not been informed yet, but they certainly will be made aware in due course. AR advised we will be writing to the group very soon and we will look at other options with the group when time allows.

LH asked regarding Beckenham Green wanting a half container on the green but have not heard back from the Council. JH met with the group and believed that he had already given the go-ahead for the container, but he will investigate further with PR. The group have also asked about the planting in the raised beds which the BiD team planted with seasonal planting. JH advised that he investigate this and advise the group directly.

LH advised that the Friends of Whitehall Rec have asked about the live electric cable which is going through a shrub bed. JH has raised the issue with property colleagues and believes the area is safe and that the barriers can be removed. JH to update SG directly.

LH advised that KR had received a survey request through the post and LH asked what the detail was with this. FK explained that this was the public satisfaction survey and will share the outcomes of the survey once they are returned with the group. FK also explained that three thousand addresses are randomly selected for the postal surveys from across the borough.

LH spoke about Environmental Matters newsletter, there was a part of the newsletter on volunteering. The content on the website link is out of date and needs reviewing. The Youth Advisory Panel is mentioned which he believes is no longer running. Some other details are also out of date. JH to review the website with colleagues and report back to the group.

LH advised that the Friends Forum AGM dates are to be agreed three dates are possible. After discussion the 12th May 6.30pm was agreed upon for the AGM and it will be held virtually.

AOB

No AOB.

Next Meeting Date

Next meeting date arranged for 10am Thursday 17th June 2021.