



Forum Partnership Meeting No. 29

Thursday 30th March 2023, 10am – Video Conferencing

Larry Herbert (LH)
Richard Gibbons (RG)
Vivien Smith (VS)
Barbara Arora (BA)
Keith Rodwell (KR)

Hannah Jackson (HJ)
James Hilsden (JH)
Hugh Chapman (HC)
Jane Askew (JA)

Martyn Bradley (MB)
Andy Hodgson (AH)
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: Tony Allen (TA) Kari Silvester (KS) Walter Leonard (WL)

idverde: Steven Lofting (SL)

LBB: Cllr Aisha Cuthbert (AC)

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 18: Tool provision for Friends Groups - LH had meeting with JH, want to change direction, decided to have welcome packs for new groups. LH received email from Cllr Aisha Cuthbert confirming £5000 has been approved for expenditure.

HJ added they have agreed with AC that she will provide some funding from portfolio holder Funds where they can support on funding. Welcome packs are able to be put together for new groups when they are established. JH to finalise list – **Action closed**.

Action 24: Park signage updates – **Continued to be reviewed** AH sent out form, LH confirmed didn't receive this. AH to send onto LH. AH states more of a trial, has received responses from it. LH has had a look and asks what files are accepted in terms of uploading photos. AH to look and confirm which ones are best.

HJ added it was sent to members of working groups to receive feedback of its user friendliness, the intention was to make sure it was right, then it can be distributed to Friends Group Contacts across the Borough to see who can recruit, and for idverde to pick up on any gaps that the Friends Groups can't resource. HJ suggests will be good idea to get working group back now the document has been made. Programme to be reviewed after Easter Break.

RG asks AH why switched from Microsoft Forms to Google Forms, had drafted similar form, asking for name of park to be typed in manually, will lead to inconsistencies, suggests for drop down menu to be added. Conditions of signs can be subjective whether they're good or poor, what can be acceptable to one, may not be to a different individual. Helpful Hints with examples may be useful.

AH would prefer to do in Microsoft Forms, but people can only upload photos to his account if members of the organisation, and long process to provide idverde email account to each individual. Google forms requires a Google Account, which is more likely for people to have. Confirms can have a drop down added to document, suggests may not be easier as 167 different parks. RG adds if it was going to Friends Groups in first instance, would encourage them to fill them in more accurately. AH suggests when Groups meet to establish an A4 Digital Guidance sheet which includes example of conditions.

BA asks if drop down can be filtered by Ward, if it simplifies it more. AH can't technically do that himself, but will look into it. RG adds from his understanding Google Forms is a simple format.

Action 25: Water fountains – **Ongoing** JH confirms spoke to Property, project has only just finished. Was undertaken by Jerry Kelly (JK). More locations that don't have any utility connections. JH having handover meeting with JK and David Braybrook (DB) and discussing existing list. Once final list has been established, we can progress and look more into depth and include costs.

Action 30: Website information- **Continued to be reviewed**. DB now included in review, LH wants Forum website to represent the main source for detailed Friends Group information with links from the Council and idverde websites going to Forum, thereby eliminating duplication and simplifying maintenance. Forum would endeavour to keep its information current and up-to-date.

LH mentions idverde website still hasn't been upgraded, unsure of timeframe for completion. MB adds still committed to upgrade of current website, but due to new recruit of Head of IT who has different views on the Technology, he has been working on the internal challenges. AH adds has been making some quick changes to current website in the meantime, and asks for Friends to let him know if they spot any errors.

KR mentions has had no response from Council in last few years, has issues that need to be addressed and has tried, but there has been no attempt to communicate. Similar issues with idverde website. JH adds working with DB, there has been continual updates on website, in processing of changing annual Cemeteries updates, Biodiversity. Naturalised Verges links have now been uploaded, Parks By-laws etc. HJ suggests to sit and discuss with KR concerns to get better understanding and find a way to resolve these. LH adds it's around the Friends Groups and Volunteers, how the links are streamlined.

Action 37: Communications processes- HJ – still under review, haven't progressed as much as wanted requested this to be moved onto next quarter for DB to take on drafting the process.

4. Council Update

HJ showed a presentation which gave an update to both the nature friendly verges trial and the sustainable planting trial.

HJ went on to describe the current status of the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund. JA added that LBB have been working with idverde and produced a flowchart of how the application process works for Jubilee Fund, will send to LH for it to be circulated to Friends Groups.

HJ: Gave an update on Arboriculture, Tree Planting season has been extended due to favourable weather conditions, and because of type of tree which has been purchased to plant. HC Gave an update on behalf of the tree team:

- Average of 577 trees have been planted, in total so far 1590 trees have been purchased
- New contract is going well, on track for completion by the end of April
- QR codes to be installed for public to download an app, scan code and information about the particular tree is provided, photos, water records and what the contractor has done. Allows them to log incidence of watering. This will create a great opportunity of engagement with the public

LH raised a query on Jubilee Parks Fund, how they are going to be rolled out and managed, concerned there's 20+ projects and not enough staff to manage this. HJ advised LBB & idverde have a joint working board which switches between both, JA has been brought in to assist with project managing, ensuring we are on top of delivery with the projects. There is a team effort between both LBB & idverde.

AH added first year in 2 years idverde are not recruiting, and have flexed the Team structures to adapt towards the inevitable increase in workload. Mentioned former colleague Amy Rogers, was part time – she has now been replaced with a full time officer. More admin officers have been brought into the Parks Development Team which supports the order raising, gathering quotes etc. Advised LBB & idverde do have regular meetings on this, and on a good track. Understands concern but we have flexed in order for this to work out.

KR added if LBB have provided idverde with any additional resources to undertake the projects. AH states LBB & idverde work as a partnership, and working closely with JA and DB. LBB & idverde come together to deliver the additional resources. HJ added at fortnightly meeting, resourcing is reviewed and discussed, and if it was to become an issue for idverde, the council will be there for support. Confident they currently have the resources needed to deliver. MB added understands LH and KR's concerns, but doesn't think there is a need to worry at this moment in time.

VS raised other concerns on:

- That some groups did more than others in terms of preparing tender documents with suppliers
- Confusion as some were told the projects were going to be re-scoped, and confusion with suppliers on installation in playground
- Direct communication process with groups about the projects

JA advised that groups would be informed when applications are complete on a case by case basis, depending on the amount of scoping work needed, certain works done in different seasons. Groups will be updated on the progress of projects. AH added with JA meeting more frequently, the updates to groups will be more frequently now.

HJ added when Infrastructure is being installed into Parks, Council needs to be assured it is to sufficient quality so it can be maintained. Intention is for idverde to support procurement activities, and idverde have good relationships with the suppliers. Can be different when the funding is part of a wider set of funding, which will be reviewed with the applicant. Applicants are invested into exactly what is being installed, and ensures JA will continue to spend time with people to ensure what is going in, is what people have asked for. AH added if there are opportunities for economy scale saving, idverde will be interested, as beneficial to both LBB & idverde, but both will need to keep evaluating this.

RG raised concerns on recent works that have took place at Priory Gardens. JH advised LBB are looking into this, and hopefully can give more re-assurance on this. Hoping with the applications that have been approved, they can create resolutions to any past issues that have occurred. Understands concerns.

RG raised query on the new Trials which have been introduced - what percentage of potential the trials represent, and if there's a process that they are being promoted. HJ advises unsure on percentage for Nature Friendly Verges, will find out. For the sustainable bedding proposal, based on m2 around 10%. Specific sites were picked for feedback. RG asked if Councillors are being informed on the benefits of trials. HJ advised have prepared briefings for the Ward Councillors in which the Trials are taking place. Q&A event also happening which they can participate in.

RG also raised query on the Tree Planting Programme – whether the trees on website be the only ones that are being planted this year with the new QR codes, or will they include QR codes that were fixed to trees from last year. HC advised it is currently only going to be for trees that have been planted this year, but is point of discussion, as to whether they can include previous years of planted trees. Moving forward will be all trees planted by new contractor. RG asked how communication will be given to Tree Friend Groups/co-ordinators. HC advises no fixed date, but are in the process, goal is to have all information out and in place in advance of the Tree Watering Season. Still back and forth of Risk Assessments and Health & Safety elements.

BA raised queries on Trials – very small proportion of verges across the Borough, disappointed that only 1 recommendation from Biodiversity Panel was taken up. No Chislehurst verges have been used. Questioned if communities can do this themselves and plant wild flowers where there is agreement between residents. HJ added verges that were selected were based upon different types of environments. Appreciates concerns raised, but we are moving in the right direction with the Trials. Discussed with the AC on whether residents can plant themselves, and at this stage of the Trial, it is keen that this doesn't happen, so the Councils trial can play through, which can alternatively then be

reviewed about expanding into additional areas, subject to feedback. AH added understands concerns, but signage is going out, 47 different posts to inform everyone of what is happening. Can look into other areas with Community Managers which can be influenced a lot quicker. MB added important factor is that we are moving forward, understands frustration, but is a great opportunity to develop Biodiversity in Bromley, excited for feedback on the trials. Not many authorities investing into green spaces like Bromley are.

KR raised queries on Jubilee Fund:

- Have any applications been rejected
- Applications from original list applied for the full amount, on awarded list some were not approved, gave example on Kelsey and Eden Park £40,000 applied and only £20,000 were approved. One was for Croydon Road Rec, majority applied for were signage. Can you confirm whether this was one that was rejected?

HJ advised two applications received from the same group for the same green space, and one was rejected as we only allow one per group at this time. There will be another application which will be rejected as St Pauls Cray is oversubscribed, and we don't have enough funding for that Ward to be able to accept all of them. All 3 will go to the decision maker to oversee.

JA added for Kelsey applications, there's further scoping works that need to be carried out before submitted for approval, but is taking longer than planned as delays in meeting with the group. AH added it was delayed due to the snow, but a meeting has now taken place and progress is being made. JA added more applications should be approved soon, currently with AC, and once approved can start to progress. Croydon Rd Rec application is still being looked at, there's no guarantee that when an application is submitted it will be approved, there are processes that are involved. At a stage where some wards will be fully funded, but others where we haven't received any applications, but we'll be encouraging those to submit them.

LH raised concern for dog poo bags. JH advised current funding had come to an end, so looking at other fundraising options. Estimate of £10,000 for a year's worth of bags, still looking into, hoping to progress and will keep Friends updated. AH added they were all sponsored by businesses, and the sponsorships expired. Received email for a potential new sponsor, waiting to hear back, but unsure as to whether they will sponsor all of the units. If we do not progress soon, units may need to be taken down, as can start to generate more complaints.

BA also raised queries on this – if possible, publicity in Council Environmental Newsletter to support Friends Groups on anti-dog fouling and that the intended use of bags is for emergencies. AH advised Angela Wood and Penny Read can look into, could be that we are near the end of the programme, and the dispensers may need to come down.

RG raised query as to whether idverde can add signs to bins in parks for anti-dog fouling campaign. AH advised happy to look into.

5. idverde Update

SH started presentation by giving an update on behalf of the countryside and education team including:

- Dutch Elms Disease Resistant trees been planted by Biodiversity Conservation Trust in High Elms
- Training has taken place with partnerships for new Ranger Officers
- Introducing National Wildlife weeks once a month to Education Programme
- New Training sessions for Friends Groups to take place this year

AH continued the presentation with a look at projects that have been undertaken by the Team. AH reported about changes in structure to the Parks Development Team – now finally staffed and firing at all cylinders

BA raised query with SH if any Rangers are available to lead Bat Walk with Friends Groups. SH confirmed not an issue, will liaise directly with BA to discuss further.

HC mentioned Beckenham Green project, hedge that was vandalised, Tree Team could help with these issues.

LH asked for dates of Training Courses that Countryside Team will be doing with Friends Groups. SH confirmed first date of 26th April for an amphibian survey course to be held at Scadbury. SH to provide further dates to LH.

LH asked if there is anything set for King Coronation, had meeting where a councillor suggested flying union jacks on park flagpoles. AH advised a Borough lead event occurring at Queens Gardens, which is screening of Coronation. 3 or 4 Parks Group events taking place, which are being led by Community Groups and many street parties happening. HJ advised unsure for certain about flag query, will pick up with Lydia Lee who is leading Coronation Celebrations for the Borough

6. Friends Forum Update

LH gave an update on communication between Friends Groups which includes:

- WhatsApp group launched for all volunteers, suggested CMs can spread word to volunteers if it is of interest to join
- About to send registration forms out, to update recorded details
- Trying to persuade more Groups to have a group-wide email address
- Also trying to encourage all Groups to respond to the quarterly request for effort statistics, thereby making the results more meaningful.

7. AOB

None.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting date has been arranged for: Thursday 29th June 2023 starting at 10am (Online). The subsequent meeting will be Thursday 28th September 2023.

[Meeting ended]