Forum Partnership Meeting No. 42

Tuesday 30th June 2026, 10am – Video Conferencing

Larry Herbert (LH)
Barbara Arora (BA)
Ralph Ambrose (RA)
Cllr Josh Coldspring-White (PH)
Hannah Jackson (HJ)
David Braybrook (DB)
Hugh Chapman (HC)
Mollie Lyon (ML)
Mark Garthwaite (MG)
Angela Wood (AW)
Sue Holland (SH)
Jess Dalton (JD) (Minutes)

AGENDA

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

1. Welcome & Introductions

LH opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

2. Apologies for Absence

Friends Forum: Vivien Smith (VS), Keith Rodwell (KR), Richard Gibbons (RG), Ian Thomas (IT)
LBB: N/A
Idverde: N/A

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

The minutes were accepted as a true reflection of the previous meeting, with the provision that the next meeting is Tuesday 29TH September 2026.

Action 50: Improved on-line search facilities on website(s) - MG advised time scheduled with idverde web hosts to improve those search facilities, hasn't been progressed yet, as it's in a long line with the other idverde websites. HJ added LBB were improving the information on the Council website about how people could access sport locally and that's now been actioned. **Closed**.

Action 52: Bin Review at Green St Green - MG met with RG & the GM team, hoping to replace a couple open top bins to closed top bins as part of AW's team programme of replacements, most likely will be early next year, RG is all aware. **Closed**.

Action 54: Wildlife Crime - DB has raised with problem solving group, who noted that the Police have a lot of challenges in catching the individuals responsible, however DB now has a new network of different contacts who can be contacted when elements of crime of ASB is reported in parks. HJ added LBB are considering whether or not can use a PSPO around anti-social behaviour, which public protection colleagues are reviewing and expect to be looking at renewing next year and consulting on next year. **Closed**.

Action 56: New Friends Group (Hillview Hollow) – LH advised group has been introduced & all information has been received. All in hand. **Closed**.

Action 57: Review Meeting Format - New format has been actioned by LBB & idverde, all parties happy with new format of information shared prior to meetings. **Closed.**

Action 58: Website to include all Parkrun information - MG advised have been able to update the parkrun information internally, which is now live on the website, will be making a slight amendment, just to add a little bit more information. **Closed.**

The remaining open actions (47-63 inclusive) were reviewed, and details are available for view in the action tracker. Due dates were checked to ensure they were correctly represented. All new actions, as raised in the meeting and indicated below, were added to the list. The tracker accompanies these minutes as a separate excel file.

4. Council Update

HJ provided an update on LBB funding which included:

Council Budget & Financial Position

- Council facing significant budget pressures, with a gap comparable to the size of the annual Environment and Community Services budget.
- Transformation programme underway to identify savings and improve ways of working. Focus areas can include:
  - Managing demand pressures.
  - Reducing costs in high-demand services (particularly social care and housing).
- New spend control panel introduced:
  - Provides additional scrutiny of expenditure.
  - Ensures spending is focused on essential requirements.

External Funding & Developer Contributions

- Work ongoing to increase external funding opportunities.
- Greater focus on securing Section 106 and developer contributions. E.g. £860,000 Section 106 contribution secured from the former Civic Centre site development for heritage improvements at Bromley Palace Park.
- Further discussions ongoing with developers regarding additional improvements, including lake enhancements.

idverde Contract Extension

- Preparation underway for a report to the Executive in September regarding formal extension of the idverde contract.
- Builds on the previous in-principal decision.
- Forum engagement requested ahead of the report entering the committee process.

Arboriculture Contract Review

- Review underway regarding future arrangements for arboriculture supply contracts.
- Existing contracts due to end in September 2027.
- Options being considered, with a report expected during the current municipal year.

Parks User Satisfaction Survey

- Annual parks and open spaces satisfaction survey being prepared. Survey will run July–August, closing in September.
- Friends groups encouraged to participate and provide feedback on parks services.

ML continued to give an update on the projects including:

Kelsey Park Bridge and Depot

- Following completion of the bridge project in March, feasibility work is progressing for repairs to the Monet Bridge.
- Friends group funding contribution has enabled initial feasibility studies.
- Study will assess whether existing bridge abutments can be retained and provide indicative repair costs.
- Further repairs subject to securing grant funding; fundraising support with Friends group planned.
- Depot project progressing:
  - Planning application submitted.
  - Tender issued.
  - Works anticipated to start in autumn (subject to approval).

Scadbury Moated Manor

- Enabling works tender completed; three bids received but all exceeded available budget.
- Works include:
  - Vegetation clearance.
  - Drainage improvements.
  - De-silting to enable condition surveys.
- Value engineering options considered, but full scope deemed necessary.
- Funding application being prepared through Historic England HE1 grant programme.
- Early contractor involvement report commissioned to assess moat silt levels and support accurate cost planning.
- Historic England supportive of approach to complete enabling works first and de-risk future conservation works.

Croydon Road Splashpad Project

- Working closely with Friends group.
- Procurement process completed and preferred contractor identified.
- £15,000 secured for initial design phase.
- Friends group fundraising event planned for August to support remaining costs.
- Design phase expected to begin September (subject to funding) with completion aimed for early 2027.
- London Marathon Trust funding application unsuccessful.
- Expression of interest submitted to National Lottery Reaching Communities Fund.
- Fundraising activity continues for delivery phase.

Keston Ponds Project

- Secured £363,123 Green Routes Grant towards:
  - Ravensbourne House Pond.
  - River corridor improvements.
  - Car park works.
- Further funding still required for full scheme delivery.
- Tender issued for funded works.
- Continued engagement with:
  - Friends of Keston.
  - Historic England.
  - Natural England.
  - Forestry Commission.
  - Environment Agency.
- Additional Historic England funding application underway.
- Water quality and ground investigation surveys in progress.

Crofton & Sparrow Woods Project

- Water quality monitoring ongoing following reported pollution linked to Thames Water outfalls.
- Technical work completed:
  - Water engineer concept designs.
  - Botanical surveys.
- Environment Agency funding confirmed for current financial year.
- Further funding options being explored pending water quality findings.
- Project update presented to Friends AGM and positively received.

Church House Gardens Pond

- Thames Water has completed repairs to reinstate water flow into the pond.
- Water supply remains rainfall-dependent and will mainly improve levels during wetter periods.
- Further works planned with idverde colleagues to remove internal restrictions and improve water movement.

Bromley Palace Park – Moat Improvements

- Positive discussions underway with developer of former Civic Centre site regarding potential funding contribution towards moat de-silting works.
- £860k Section 106 contribution previously secured for heritage improvements.
- Awaiting contractor programme details and funding confirmation before progressing works.

  Updates to continue as discussions progress.

DB gave a further update:

Nature Friendly Verges and Sustainable Planting Trails Review

- Surveys for nature-friendly verges have commenced for the current growing season.
- Results will be reviewed later in the year to inform future management decisions.
- Positive results to date:
  - Sites are meeting biodiversity targets.
  - Retained sites continue to improve year-on-year.

- School engagement programme continuing:
  - Two additional schools visited.
  - Further sessions planned.
- Website updates completed to share trial progress and biodiversity findings.
- Sustainable planting surveys underway for the third year.
- Second phase of the trial due to conclude at the end of the year.
- Working group will review:
  - Biodiversity survey results.
  - Resident feedback.
- Recommendations will be made to the Portfolio Holder on future management approach.
  Review expected to progress through the committee cycle early next year.

Green Flag Applications

- Green Flag inspections completed at:
  - Queen's Gardens.
  - Kelsey Park.
  - Scadbury Park (new application).
- Positive feedback received from judges.
- Inspections highlighted strong partnership working between:
  - idverde.
  - Friends groups.
  - Council teams.
  Results awaited.

Countryside Stewardship Funding

- Existing Countryside Stewardship agreements coming to an end.
- Replacement applications being prepared with Sue's team.
  Aim to:
  - Secure agreements for additional sites.
  - Increase available funding.
  - Support enhanced land management and biodiversity works.
- Some renewed agreements already approved.
  Remaining applications being monitored through monthly contractual meetings.

Infrastructure Repairs

- Annual infrastructure survey completed.
- Review underway to identify priority repairs based on:
  - Severity of issues.
  - Available budget.
- Improved monitoring system continues across assets.
  Overall standards remain good, with seasonal challenges acknowledged.

Bromley Biodiversity Plan

- Work underway to update the Bromley Biodiversity Plan.
- New plan will cover the next 4–5 years.
- Stakeholder input and support requirements being reviewed.
  Aim to complete update within required timescales.

HC gave an update on arboricultural matters:

Young Tree Maintenance Programme

- Weekly watering programme underway for newly planted street and park trees.
- Each tree receiving approximately 50 litres of water per week until September.
- Public support with watering local trees welcomed, particularly during dry periods.

Tree Surveying Programme

- Annual tree surveys underway across priority wards, including:
  - Kelsey & Eden Park.
  - Shortlands.
  - Langley.
  - Bickley & Sundridge.
  - St Paul's Cray.
  - West Wickham.
- Surveys cover both street and park trees.

Tree Management Strategy Review

- Review underway ahead of the current strategy expiry in 2027.
- Key focus:
  - Strengthening the section on tree risk management.
  - Improving clarity and accessibility of information.
- Forum and members will have an opportunity to review and provide feedback before formal approval (expected later in the autumn).

Arboriculture Contract Update

- Contract performance remains rated green.
- Consideration underway regarding contract extensions:
  - Current contracts end September 2027.
  - Option to extend for one year being reviewed.
- Options appraisal underway for the future arboriculture service and future procurement approach.

Tree Removal Consultation Process

- New consultation requirements introduced under the Environment Act.
- Process being developed for public consultation where street trees are removed (where exemptions do not apply).
- Website process being prepared to ensure transparency and allow public feedback. Launch expected shortly.

Tree Inspection Programme

- Insurance-related tree inspections planned for winter 2026/27.
- Focus areas include:

Bickley & Sundridge	Biggin Hill	Bromley Common	
Chelsfield	Coney Hall	Crofton	
Farnborough	Hayes	Holwood	
Kelsey & Eden Park	Langley	Orpington	Shortlands

- Some inspections may be brought forward where safety risks are identified.
- Programme will include some trees on park boundaries adjoining private properties.

Tree Sponsorship Scheme

- Website review underway to make the tree sponsorship process:
  - Easier to use.
  - More engaging for residents and stakeholders.

  Updated information will be shared with the Forum once available.

LH raised query noting that the water cube at Whitehall Rec has not been refilled, making it difficult to maintain plants. HC advised refill arrangements are currently being organised for Whitehall and other Tiny Forest sites, with water supply to be restored shortly.

LH raised query on behalf of RG on difficulty locating the Tree Friend Toolkit online and query about whether the draft environmental update progressed. HC confirmed Toolkit has been formally updated and published and he will send directly to LH & RG.

LH raised concern on behalf of RG on the health and safety video may discourage volunteering due to its tone and emphasis on risks. HJ advised that the video is intended as a supporting resource alongside risk assessments, not a barrier to volunteering. It is part of a corporate approach across volunteer Friends groups. No immediate changes planned, but feedback noted and usage/views may be reviewed.

LH/RA raised concerns on confusion among volunteers about which organisation contacts them after sign-up & some volunteers disengage before joining due to early-stage induction and health & safety requirements. HJ agreed that communication flow could be clearer, will review onboarding messaging so volunteers understand local Friends groups will contact them. RA suggested a volunteer exchange or cross-site programme to share skills and improve engagement. HJ confirmed open to exploring feasibility collaboratively. LH commented there are regular enquiries received but follow-up and conversion into active volunteering appears inconsistent.

LH raised concerns on goose egg treatment following forum discussion at Bromley Palace Park, whether all eggs were removed/destroyed and whether policy is consistent. ML confirmed that the standard practice is to leave one egg per nest as part of the goose egg management approach & that in the Bromley Palace Park case, the eggs were not treated and the situation escalated after engagement with the Friends group, after which operatives withdrew. ML suggested that notifying Friends groups in advance of operations may not be practical and could be counterproductive, potentially causing unnecessary concern. SH confirmed operational detail that one egg is left untouched per nest under the contract. SH suggested that in the Bromley Palace Park case, the eggs were likely not treated and may instead have been predated by foxes, based on site conditions. SH reinforced that the process is part of a contracted operational control programme & emphasised that some nests are not actively encouraged, depending on site suitability. DB confirmed that he had direct communication with the complainant & reiterated that: the eggs in question were not treated.
& this was already explained and accepted in follow-up discussions. DB stated that the matter was considered resolved from their perspective.

PH commented that he welcomed being invited to the meeting and said he was pleased to attend. As a relatively new appointee, he noted that one of the highlights of his role so far has been visiting Friends groups and learning about the history and unique features of local parks.

5. *i*dverde Update

MG provided an update on Grounds Maintenance:

Grass Cutting

- Moving towards the end of a challenging peak grass-cutting period
- Conditions impacted by wet weather followed by hot spells, causing rapid grass growth.
- Monitoring with council teams is ongoing and indicates:
  - Highway verges performing lowest in maintenance metrics due to rapid growth.
- Overall performance scores:
  - 94% for the latest period (lower-performing categories)
  - Up to 98% for higher-performing areas (e.g. bedding, playgrounds, managed grass areas)
- Position is improving and the peak period is now easing.

Machinery Investment

- Operating with a full workforce capacity.
- New equipment has been introduced to support delivery, including:
  - Three new ride-on mowers (for highway verges)
  - One large tractor-towed grass cutting machine.
- Total recent investment in machinery: approximately £166,000.

Engagement with Friends Groups

- Annual / six-monthly walkaround site visits with Friends groups have been beneficial.
- Recent visits include:
  - Priory Gardens
  - Green Street Green
  - Kelsey Park
  - (and earlier engagement at other sites such as Chislehurst Rec)
- These visits are intended to:
  - Improve communication between contractors, operatives, and Friends groups.
  - Strengthen working relationships on the ground.

Partnership Working and Communication – MG emphasised the strength of relationship between LBB & idverde. Advised of an open-door approach to discuss successes and issues and Address concerns constructively.

AW provided an update on idverde's Community & Fundraising highlights which included:

Staffing Update – Parks & Engagement Team

- Departure of Parks & Engagement Coordinator (Katie Berry) confirmed.
- Recruitment for replacement role is underway:
  - Friends Forum involved in interview process
  - Shortlisting in progress
  - Interviews expected in July.
- Vicky West covering west of borough is actively engaging with Friends groups.
- Key activity includes:
  - Whitehall Recreation Ground: proposed community book swap/library and raised bed improvements.
  - Biggin Hill Recreation Ground: supporting new interpretation boards.

- Betts Park: supporting community garden development.
- Supporting Green Flag award preparation and judging across sites.

Shaftesbury Park Project

- Playground refurbishment completed:
  - New inclusive and modern play equipment installed.
  - Zoned layout introduced (younger children + junior area)
- Pond restoration completed:
  - Silt removal and invasive vegetation cleared (crassula and pygmy weed)
  - Habitat recovery underway; pond now retaining water successfully.
  - Early ecological success noted (dragonflies observed)
- Upcoming plans:
  - Community painting/art project with local primary school (July)
  - Official reopening event with the Mayor of Bromley (August)

Betts Park Outdoor Gym

- Project progressing in partnership with Friends group.
- Next steps:
  - Further public consultation planned (summer)
  - Funding application to the Environment Trust (October submission).
- Funding secured through:
  - UK Power Networks levy
  - KTR Trust contribution.

Community Garden – Betts Park Depot Site

- Disused depot being transformed into a community garden space.
- Progress includes:
  - Clearance of fly-tipped waste (supported by grounds maintenance team)
  - Installation of new pond (with support from Frog Life)
  - Construction of raised beds using donated community materials
- Friends group working towards creating a community hub.
- Council supporting future fundraising efforts.

Community Involvement

- Upcoming “brush-up day” at Betts Park (August):
  - Joint activity involving Friends groups, council staff, and contractor teams.
- Focus on playground fencing and site improvements.

Green Flag Awards

- Acknowledgement and thanks given to Friends groups for their involvement in Green Flag applications and assessments.
- Positive anticipation of results and feedback from judges.

SH provided an update on idverde’s Countryside & Education highlights which included:

Staffing

- No structural changes in countryside staffing.
- 1 part-time instructor Faydra has left the BEECHE team.
- Recruitment approach highlighted:
  - A long-term volunteer is being considered for the vacancy.

Volunteer & Education Activity

- Since April:
  - 89 supervised volunteer sessions delivered.
  - 2,202.5 volunteer hours contributed.
- Work completed includes:
  - Infrastructure improvements
  - Pathway cutbacks
  - Ecological surveys.

  Strong acknowledgement of Friends groups' ongoing contribution to site maintenance and biodiversity work.

Friends Training Courses & Attendance

- 5 Friends courses agreed in partnership with Friends Forum.
- Delivery update:
  - 2 courses delivered successfully
  - 1 cancelled due to low attendance
  - 1 cancelled due to no-shows
- Attendance highlights:
  - Amphibian course (Scadbury): 8 attendees
  - Bird/nest recording walk: cancelled.
  - Tree survey course: low bookings (2)
  - Bat box check & walk: fully booked (20 attendees).
- Concern raised over variable uptake and engagement & request made for advice on improving promotion and visibility of courses.

Community Engagement & Events

- Delivered biodiversity engagement activities:
  - Bug hunts at Bromley Palace Park and Whitehall
- Strong partnership working with:
  - BEECHE Centre
  - Friends of High Elms (supporting BioBlitz event)
  - Bromley Conservation volunteers (survey support).
- External engagement at public events:
  - Keston Fest
  - Hayes Fair.
- Planned event:
  - Summer fair at High Elms (early September), with Friends group participation and stalls encouraged.

Biodiversity Surveys & Environmental Monitoring

- Extensive seasonal survey programme underway (April–October), including:
  - Bat box checks.
  - Butterfly transects.
  - Reptile and amphibian surveys
  - Orchid and dormouse monitoring
  - Glow worm and habitat surveys.
- Strong reliance on Friends groups and volunteers to support delivery.
- Recognition of significant ongoing volunteer contribution to ecological monitoring.

Habitat Management & Funding

- Conservation Stewardship funding Approved for meadow/habitat mix at:
  - Ravensbourne
  - High Elms
  - Hangrove
- Further applications pending approval:
  - Jubilee site
  - 17 additional sites (including Norman Park area)
- Expectation of further approval from Natural England imminently.
- Additional works:
  - Butterfly bank scrape completed at Cator Park
  - Ongoing monitoring planned.

Education & Outreach (BEECHE)

- Very high activity levels since April:
  - 30 events in May
  - Approximately 2,000+ total educational attendees.
- School engagement:
  - 49 school sessions delivered.
  - Around 1,040 pupils engaged.
- Programme described as highly successful and continuing into summer schedule.

LH raised query whether commercial event donations should be extended beyond Friends Groups to support the wider parks network, including sites without Friends Groups. MG supported revised wording to encourage donations linked to events. MG asked about practicalities of donation flow and Friends Group bank accounts. LH confirmed most Friends Groups have bank accounts. HJ suggested donations for parks without Friends Groups could be routed via the Friends Forum. MG agreed donations could be channelled centrally and redistributed appropriately.

LH/RA raised concerns that event organisers do not always fully clear sites (e.g. signage left behind, litter, cable ties, cigarette ends) & Friends groups sometimes undertaking final clean-up. MG confirmed clean-up is a mandatory requirement of event agreements, and that organisers are expected to remove all materials; council can charge for removal if needed. MG requested for issues be reported so organisers can be directly challenged.

LH raised queries on why playground equipment is sometimes removed and not replaced and whether this is due to inspection processes or lack of funding. HJ confirmed issue is mainly capital funding availability, not inspection failure. The contractor repairs where viable; end-of-life assets referred to council. Funding routes include grants, Section 106, and external funding (e.g. Veolia). HJ confirmed the inspection regime includes Daily visual checks, Quarterly inspections & Annual external inspections. MG confirmed daily inspections now carried out by trained litter operatives, reports generated and shared internally & any repairs escalated where safety issues identified.

LH raised concern that insurance renewal paperwork was issued on or just before renewal date, leaving little time for review. MG acknowledged concern. AW confirmed confusion due to staff absence/cover changes at insurer (Unity) & advised Friends Groups to ignore incorrectly issued invoices, will follow up with insurer.

LH raised concern about high per-group administration fees (£60 per group) and overall value for money. AW/MG agreed review is appropriate and committed to explore improvements. SH confirmed alternative arrangement exists for Hayes Common with lower additional premium.

6. Friends Forum Update

LH gave an update on Forum business which included:

Vandalism, Graffiti & Fly-Tipping in Parks

- Reported widespread vandalism, including:
  - Graffiti on signs at Keston Common
  - Playground vandalism (e.g. Hoblingwell)
  - Incidents also noted at Crofton / Sparrow Woods / Darrick Woods

MG commented Fly-tipping remains broadly consistent over several years whilst graffiti reporting has significantly declined in the last 24 months (possible under-reporting). HJ encouraged continued reporting to build intelligence for enforcement & proposed bringing park security functions in-house to improve deployment and response.

BA raised query on ASB and illegal dirt-bike activity in Chislehurst. RA added ongoing ASB linked to quad bikes, catapults, drugs, and wider youth-related activity. Believes that incidents are interconnected across locations. HJ reinforced need for multi-agency partnership (council, police, community) and advised continued reporting to support intelligence gathering. HJ confirmed escalation routes via problem-solving groups and noted potential strengthening of enforcement through PSPO review.

RA raised concern that Friends Group feel reporting is ineffective and burden of evidence gathering falls on volunteers. HJ acknowledged frustration and reporting fatigue, emphasised importance of reporting for intelligence building & noted reports may appear reduced due to under-reporting.

7. AOB

None.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting date has been arranged for: Tuesday 29th September 2026 starting at 10am (Online).
The subsequent meeting will be: Tuesday 12th January 2027.

[Meeting ended]