

Bromley Friends Forum

Minutes of the Members' Meeting held on 22nd January 2020
at Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, Bromley 7pm - 9pm

Attendance:

Forum Committee:

Refer to secretary for details

Friends Group Representatives:

Refer to secretary for details

Apologies:

Refer to secretary for details

1. Chairman's Welcome

LH opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance, in particular JA from the new Crofton and Sparrow Woods Group. Members introduced themselves and their Friends Group association.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 18th September were accepted with two minor typographical alterations.

The minutes would be revised with full names removed prior to publication on the Forum website.

Matters Arising:

2 Street Cleaning Grant: Response awaited from LBB, to be raised at next stakeholder panel meeting. **Action: LBB**

2 Animal Control Policy: Nick Skeet has now left LBB and the matter passed to James Hilsden. There has been no follow up and it was agreed to drop the action.

3.2 QR Code: This has been added to the template contacts poster. Action complete.

4.1 Overview Questionnaire: Results have been collated and are the subject of a later agenda item. Action complete.

3. Forum News

3.1. Council/*idverde* feedback

A partnership meeting with the Council and *idverde* had been attended on 12th December. Quite a large number of actions had been discussed and concern raised at the slow rate of progress on some of these. In particular the revised Partnership Statement feedback, promised to be issued prior to Christmas, was still awaited.

There had been no progress on providing Forum with a sight of the contract specification nor the full policy on memorial benches. There was progress on producing a guideline on park furniture and infrastructure and the training programme for 2020 was agreed.

Helen Cassidy had joined the education staff as its new manager and a new instructor (Charlotte) has also joined.

Work continues on producing management plans and in particular the Green Flag site plans. As well as the previous six sites it is proposed that Hayes Common is added to the list this year.

Nicola Galloway has been appointed as a new Neighbourhood Officer for the Penge/Beckenham area. A new member of staff within the arboriculture team joined the team in early January. There will be a strong push within the team plus help from *idverde* to get the number of tree enquires resolved.

LH canvassed the meeting on their views of the Forum AGM. LBB feedback had indicated some disappointment over criticism of *idverde*'s work. Forum felt that *idverde*'s presentation was not in keeping with the theme of an AGM. It was thought that written reports could be submitted in advance and that the AGM just concentrates on questions/answers.

3.2. Overview Questionnaire

LH presented to the meeting a summary of results from the recent overview questionnaire. A significant number of issues had been identified and the Forum Committee had decided that these needed to be discussed with some urgency with LBB's Assistant Director for the Environment.

Key topics in these discussions were grant applications, non-Friends park events, general communication, tools and equipment. It was hoped that following said meeting a remedial action plan would be put into place and by the time of the next stakeholder panel meeting (early March) any further concerns would be addressed.

3.3. Training update

LH reported that a training programme for 2020 had been agreed with *idverde* along with additional non-*idverde* run courses. The next scheduled course was for Live Hedge Laying to be held at Scadbury Park on 11th February. A few places were still available. Following this would be a First Aid Course on 20th March to be held at the Bromley Civic Centre.

LH also informed the meeting of *idverde*'s programme of short adult educational courses. These would need to be booked and paid for through the Bromley Parks website and Friends volunteers could claim a refund following confirmation of their attendance.

3.4. Grant Applications

LH referred to the recent email that had been sent out from *idverde's* grants team. This had raised a lot of concern and some of its detail was completely contrary to earlier discussions about the subject between the Forum and *idverde*. In particular it was not understood why all funding applications needed to be presented to *idverde* along with completing a 7 page application questionnaire. Also, why were applications for the period April 2020 to March 2021 needed to be completed by the arbitrary date of 7th February?

It was agreed the bureaucracy needs to be simplified. Simple funding applications, which did not involve land ownership approval, should be handled directly by Friends Groups (e.g. tool or PPE purchase). There should be no restrictions on when or how Friends seek funding - the more money brought into the borough is surely a benefit for all.

It was hoped that in the near future the grants team would publish a monthly roundup of funding opportunities and that Friends would be able to make decisions based on these i.e. react to funding opportunities rather than just the current insistence that a project needs to be identified before seeking funding.

3.5. Biodiversity Report

JJ reported to the meeting an overview of biodiversity matters that had been discussed by members of the Bromley Biodiversity Partnership (BBP). More detailed information accompanies these minutes.

The posters for 2020, will be toad, hedgehog, purple emperor butterfly, native shrub and tree, all unchanged from last year. In addition a new one will be added: White Admiral Butterfly. The dates for Groups to display these can be found in the accompanying BBP report. It was noted that the current Bromley Biodiversity Plan runs from 2015 to 2020 and that it was now due for update. Various parties would assist in this update including LBB's planning department.

The partnership meets every four months to discuss a variety of pertinent topics. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 18th March 2020. The partnership can be contacted on bromleybiodiversity@gmail.com.

3.6. Go Parks

LH informed members of CPRE's Go Parks campaign, where details of all London parks can be found. Members should visit the goparks.london website where they can select and own their park. Group contact information can be entered along with photos and other pertinent material to attract visitors and potential volunteers to their site. In effect this provided free advertising and members were urged to complete their entry at the earliest opportunity.

4. Friends Group Issues

4.1. Jubilee Country Park: JB reported a problem with their container of tools. It is located on Bromley owned land which is leased to a local scout group who now wish to give up the lease. The only current access to the container is via a roadway owned by the scouts. If Bromley allow them to surrender their lease they will wish to properly fence off the roadway which will then deny the Friends access to their container. So unless something is agreed by Bromley and the scouts, the container will need to be relocated or another access created or Jubilee get another container somewhere else. There are ongoing discussions between Bromley property and the scouts regarding the surrender so there might be some form of negotiation.

A recent quiz raised £500 towards a new sign. There will be a talk about the Orangutan Foundation in Borneo on 27th February at St. Augustine's Church, starting at 2pm. Entry is free but donations welcome. The Friends AGM will be on 19th March.

4.2. Bromley Town Parks: JR reported that they are looking to restore their silted up Mill Pond. They have had favourable responses from the Ravensbourne Improvement Catchment Group, The Environment Agency and Thames 21.

4.3. Winsford Gardens: DF informed the meeting that they are now working closely with Friends of Royston Fields and hoping to re-establish this once active Group.

4.4. Crofton & Sparrow Woods: JA introduced herself from the newly formed Group. Early days yet but starting to organise themselves and a number of meetings.

4.5. Norman Park: SG reported that they now have their container on site and it is believed the planning application fee they were charged has been refunded. Following the wet weather the area is currently badly flooded.

4.6. Havelock Rec: SG reported that they are planning a new avenue of trees, which they have self-funded. There is currently an issue with the on-site nursery, who plan to annex some of the land for their own use.

4.7. Whitehall Rec: JG reported that their electrical issue with live wires in one of their flower beds has not yet been sufficiently resolved and the slow progress is causing some concern. The Friends garden project has been finally sent out for tender and it is hoped will move forward fairly soon. The renovation of the pond is progressing well and it looks likely that they will have some spare pond liner left over which they hope to pass over to another worthy Group.

4.8. Chislehurst & Walden Rec: BA reported that the wet weather had brought lots of mud everywhere. However, the gardening club remains strong and active. In March the Group will be celebrating their 10th anniversary.

The Group are looking at providing a Community Toilet within their Pavilion but further on-going discussions need to take place. AS reported that new no dog signs needed replacement to make it clear that working dogs were welcome.

4.9. Keston Common: TD updated the meeting on the Biomass project trial that had been taking place within Padmall Wood. Due to the nature of the contractors machinery the amount of coppicing and tree clearance had been far greater and more destructive than expected. Indeed with the wet conditions the level of mud and damage to the pathways was of some concern. It is hoped that these will be restored to some degree later in the Spring.

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The work at Keston has now finished and it is understood that the trial has now moved to Well Wood.

TD was pleased to report that there has been a steady increase in the active membership in recent months and now we regularly get 15 or more along to our weekly activity mornings.

- 4.10. Pratts Bottom:** PH commented that the path problem reported in September was still on-going and remedial action is still awaited. The spreading of ashes, also reported last time, has gone ahead with no consequences.

The Friends along with other local groups publish a newsletter every four months or so and this seems to be welcomed by the community. This year's fair will be on 16th May and the Group are involved in its organisation.

PH reported that they had decided to merge their AGM with the local residents association into one and this meeting regarded this as a very good idea. Certainly one for Friends and Forum to consider for the future.

- 4.11. Scadbury Park:** VS told the meeting that their AGM would be on 19th February. Otherwise business as usual.
- 4.12. Darrick & Newstead Woods:** BS reported that the bin collection over the Christmas period was exceptionally poor and to a certain extent this posed a health problem. The meeting advised BS to report these types of occurrences on FixMyStreet as this will formally record the event and any trend can then be monitored and tracked.
- 4.13. Orpington Priory:** RG reported that there was a move to convert the toilet block into a café. It was not sure at this stage who was directly involved and what the timescales may be.

5. AOB

- 5.1.** RG reported that the Great British Spring Clean this year was from 20th March to 13th April. There appeared to be no Bromley-wide decision on this event but RG urged members to get involved. Pamphlets explaining the event were distributed
- 5.2.** RG informed the meeting of the Environment PDS Committee meeting on 29th January in which the conduct of the parks contractor, *idverde*, would be on the agenda. He intended to attend the meeting and in the meantime distributed LBB's report on *idverde* which was up for discussion.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The next Forum Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 24th March 2020 at the Civic Centre, starting at 7pm.