

Bromley Friends Forum

Minutes of the Members' Meeting held on 17th February 2021
Via Zoom Video, 6.30pm - 8.30pm

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 some new faces from Crystal Palace Groups.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 10th December were accepted with no alterations.

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

Matters Arising:

2 Street Cleaning Grant: No response to date. LH was asked to contact Cllr Will Harmer in one final attempt for an update. **Action: LH**

3.1 Partnership meeting: A meeting was held via Microsoft Teams on 14th January. Action complete.

3.1 Action plan for discussion: various actions and issues discussed with LBB/idverde at a meeting on 14th Jan. Action complete.

3.2 OSS response: a 6-page response was drafted by Forum and sent in to the consultation. Action complete.

3.3. Questionnaire feedback: this had been sent to LBB/idverde and discussed at the meeting on 14th Jan. Action complete.

3.4 First Aid courses: Forum had looked at the viability of on-line courses and proposed that members may wish to book themselves onto a suitable course and Forum would reimburse the cost. Members were concerned that an on-line course lacked the practical, which is required to reach certification status. Forum would revisit our current provider to see whether the situation has now changed. **Action: Forum**

3.4 Insurance position: our insurers have confirmed that an on-site first aider is not a requirement for running an activity session, only for organised events. A note to this effect had been circulated to members. Action complete.

4 Accounts Examiner: the matter of an examiner of Forum's accounts has been raised with LBB and a solution/proposal is awaited. **Action: LBB**

5.5 Survey options: Forum has looked into the use of Survey Monkey but concluded the cost is prohibitively expensive. Alternatives are to use Microsoft Forms or convert to Microsoft 365, which has several advantages. There is a cost implication and your committee needs further time to consider a prudent way forward. **Action: Forum**

3. Forum News

3.1. Council/*idverde* Feedback

LH reported that a virtual Partnership meeting had been held on 14th January, the first since 12th March 2020. Reports from LBB and *idverde* were as follows:

LBB reported that the last year had been challenging. It has been involved with track & trace and shielding. In addition, neighbourhood officers have been continuing to undertake inspections of its service providers on a monthly basis in Parks & Open Spaces, as well as taking extra calls and delivering meals to the venerable. It was felt that LBB were slow in directing *idverde* on how to look after their volunteers. LBB states that they did not receive any information ahead of government guidance and announcements and only receive these as they are delivered to the rest of the nation. They try to be as quick off the mark as possible when this information is received. In the last Service Update Meeting between LBB & *idverde* it was felt both parties were becoming more "seasoned" to this in terms of signage etc. and communications.

idverde reported that it has and continues to be challenging. Success is having the right continuity and recovery plans in place and a part of how *idverde* has operated throughout the pandemic is to look at statutory services such as cemetery operations, and ensuring the service remains operational and support increased for Covid-related burial numbers. *idverde* trained the entire workforce in grave digging too, to assist with the increased demand if needed. Ultimately there was no major impact in overall service and the recovery plans were actually in place well before restrictions were implemented which meant regular reviews of plans only. *idverde* had Covid-related impact on its workforce and activities such as parts of verge cutting had to be halted temporarily to direct and focus on parks due to increased numbers. Aspects such as verges were brought back into programme soon after lockdown though.

Teams have worked admirably to continue to provide the service as this has been hard professionally and personally as with everyone else. Parks have been heavily used as a result of Covid and unfortunately heavily abused - fly tipping and litter/rubbish has increased dramatically and has stretched their workforce/resource. Programmed works are pretty much back on track and as an example they are still fully gearing up to start grass and verge cutting. Winter pruning will take longer due to Covid and adapting to prioritising tasks. As a result a lot of the summer programme was missed. Practices have had to be altered operationally to adhere to socially distancing guidelines. Thomas Annand has now left the business and his replacement will start 8/2. Projects and infrastructure team capability has increased and as such they have now appointed a technical assistant to chase up on things such as memorial benches etc. There have been no events - however, the team was busy with event enquiries and people trying to put Covid-safe events on as well as liaising with reoccurring events to try and prepare for when they are allowed to go ahead.

3.2. Open Space Strategy Consultation

A Stakeholder Panel meeting was attended on 9th February where the Open Space Strategy document was discussed at some length. LBB had received over 800 responses from Survey Monkey and an additional 90 or so individual emails. Of the 800 LBB consider 650 responses were positive and 50 were constructive. There were some negative responses at the end of the consultation survey. A team of Council officers were now evaluating the email responses with a view to formulating a plan of how to proceed. This plan would be discussed in detail with the various partners before a redraft was considered. It was expected that this process would take quite some time and they certainly had no intention of rushing to meet some arbitrary deadline. JJ added that the London Plan was due out soon and that this most likely will have a bearing on the content of the OSS.

3.3. Training Update

LH reported that a programme of seven courses had been agreed with *idverde* for 2021. These courses would be delivered either on-line or face-to-face depending on government advice at the time the course was due. *idverde* plan to implement a booking service through their Bromley Parks website. LH agreed to publish the schedule to members.

Forum had investigated the provision of Emergency First Aid courses and it was agreed that a true certification could only be achieved by attending a practical hands-on course. LH agreed to look further into the matter and see what our current provider could offer.

3.4. Biodiversity Update

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.

Normally the Partnership meets every four months or so to discuss a variety of pertinent topics. Due to restrictions it only met once in 2020 and a virtual meeting is expected in March 2021. The Partnership can be contacted on bromleybiodiversity@gmail.com.

3.5. Forum AGM

Forum has asked *idverde* to assist with the hosting of its AGM and three dates 28th April, 5th May and 12th May have been proposed. Once a date is confirmed details will be circulated to members. It is expected that written reports will be circulated and that the AGM will largely be a question-and-answer session with the formal business of electing a committee and adopting our accounts.

4. Friends Group Issues

- 4.1. Hoblingwell Wood:** JI reported that a junior Friends Group is being set up. This has been formed through a collaboration with local schools and a team leader is being appointed through the Prince's Trust.
- 4.2. Bromley Town Parks:** JR reported that they are making good progress with the restoration of their silted-up Mill Pond. The site survey is complete and final approvals taking shape. Thames 21 are fully on-board.
- 4.3. Chislehurst & Walden Rec:** BA reported that the mud in their playground area was becoming a nightmare and that she hoped improvements to the drainage can be completed soon.
- 4.4. Crofton & Sparrow Woods:** JA reported that woodland management work undertaken by contractors had left deep ruts and excess mud as a result. The Group planned to conduct a flora survey and butterfly transect this year and were seeking advice and help from other members. LH agreed to put them in touch with Darrick Wood who had experience in this area. JA also reported that an old bridge that connected two parts of the Woods was in need of attention and wondered who to approach to move this project forward. The meeting suggested she write an FMS report and see what emerges.
- 4.5. Crystal Palace Dinosaurs:** EM introduced herself to the meeting and gave a comprehensive update from her Group. She reported that they had crowd-funded for the repair to the bridge that allows access to the Dinosaur island. This had raised some £120k and had been an exhausting three year project which was now in its final stages of completion. The bridge itself utilises a prize-winning design and was perhaps more elaborate than it needed to be. Nonetheless it was expected to last for years to come. Another smaller project they have undertaken is entitled Dinosaur Monitor. This is a collection of historic photographs that highlight the changes to the Dinosaurs over time. Additional contributions to the collection are always welcome. In another project the Group are monitoring the damage to the Dinosaurs caused through a mixture of age and vandalism. They have secured a Covid Grant of £25k to help stabilise the sculptures.
- 4.6. Biggin Hill:** DJ reported his concern that the vehicle driven by the litter collection team was causing a lot of damage to the rec, which was turning into a sea of mud.
- 4.7. Cator Park & Alexandra Rec:** MK reported a similar problem with motorbikes going at high speed across the park. MK also reported that she has resorted to emailing/minuting every decision/action of the Group so that follow-ups can be conducted in a timely and coherent manner.
- 4.8. Well Wood:** SC posted a message to say that a lot of damage is being done to Well Wood by the increased lockdown footfall and the heavy rain. People have started to walk off the main paths thereby creating numerous new paths through the nascent bluebells. The Group have put up natural barriers across said paths and have erected information signs but of course there is always the inconsiderate 'I have a right to my freedom' person who pulls them down. idverde have told the Group, as a possible solution, they could build some dead hedges taking current Covid restrictions in to account. This problem is systematic across many sites and is not going to be resolved quickly. It needs a lot of person power and effort and even then a solution is not guaranteed.

5. AOB

- 5.1. BA felt that recent LBB/*idverde* notices that had been zip-tied around our parks and green spaces was not very professional and was creating an untidy mess. Forum would raise this as an issue and request that more permanent signage was installed in future
Action: Forum
- 5.2. RG reported that the GoParks.London website was now accessible by borough and that Bromley was reachable at www.goparks.london/boroughs/bromley/ Friends are encouraged to add their details for their individual parks(s).
- 5.3. BA & SG described their initiative to brighten our streets with searching out picture silhouettes in people's windows. Chislehurst Rec's theme is called Chislehurst Cheer whilst Whitehall Rec is called Lockdown Lightup. Whitehall Rec are also planning a new scheme for Easter.
- 5.4. KR reported that they he was undertaking an exercise of consolidating the list of parks, their Groups (where they exist) plus address and other pertinent information. At the moment there is a list on the LBB website (with out-of-date information), a list on the *idverde* website (with incomplete information) and a Group only list on the Forum website (also with some incomplete information).
- 5.5. LH informed Groups that if they want to run a Covid-secure event then *idverde* are geared up to accepting such bookings and the sooner an application is received the better.

6. Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed.