

## Bromley Friends Forum

Minutes of the Members' Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2022  
Civic Centre & via Zoom Video, 7.00pm - 9.20pm

### **Attendance:**

#### **Forum Committee:**

*Please refer to secretary for details*

#### **Friends Group Representatives:**

*Please refer to secretary for details*

### **Apologies:**

*Please refer to secretary for details*

## **1. Chairman's Welcome**

LH opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance, in particular one or two new faces. A special welcome was made to our guest, Cllr Aisha Cuthbert. LH explained that tonight's meeting was both in person and via zoom and that it was possible that the internet connection may be lost towards the end of the meeting.

## **2. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 21<sup>st</sup> July were accepted with some minor alterations to section 5.3.

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

### Matters Arising:

**§2 Signage Working Party:** RG reported that a meeting has been arranged for 9<sup>th</sup> November and it is now hoped that progress will be made. Action complete.

**§3.1 Platinum Jubilee Fund Applications:** LH repeated his request for Friends to inform Forum if they planned an application under this scheme. AC reported that they expected some ten applications in the first wave, the deadline of which had been delayed to 10<sup>th</sup> November. Action complete.

**§3.1 Events in Parks:** LH reported that he had asked idverde to inform Groups when an event application that effected their site had been received so that any concerns the Friends had could be considered in a timely manner. Action complete.

**§5.4 Tool Sharpening:** LH asked idverde about a tool sharpening service but they were unable to offer this. A tools maintenance course has been arranged for 19<sup>th</sup> October where idverde would explain the principles of sharpening. Interested Groups should attend this course. Action complete.

### **3. Message from the Portfolio Holder**

AC introduced herself and expressed her intent to engage with Friends more proactively than in the past and to attend meetings where she can. AC explained that the portfolio holder role has changed slightly from the last administration and now concentrates on waste disposal, parks, carbon neutrality and street trees and no longer deals with transport.

She went to explain about the funding proposals and hoped to use the Forum as a sounding board to move projects forward and better understand how to improve matters in our communities.

Questions from the members followed and the discussion focused on trees, the 'treemendous' project, carbon neutrality target of 2027, litter bins and the platinum jubilee funding. AC happy to take away comments and respond with answers in a timely manner. AC referred to her assistant director, Hannah Jackson, who had a lot of energy and enthusiasm and together they would work to resolve these types of issues.

### **4. Forum News**

#### **4.1. Council/idverde Update**

LH reported that Forum had had a partnership meeting in the previous week and that concerns had been expressed about communication between the various parties. idverde confirmed that due to the dynamic nature of the service and ongoing supply and demand, it is not always possible to inform Friends Groups when these works will take place. idverde community managers will still communicate as best they can regarding major projects. At the meeting Hannah Jackson had suggested that a formal document be written up to agree communications expectations and determine escalation processes. It is hoped that this will help to resolve communication issues.

Continuing on the same theme LH explained that the Forum Committee was concerned that we rarely hear from a large proportion of Friends Groups and we wondered why this might be and how we can reverse that situation. Forum would like to see more Groups so we can exchange more ideas/successes/failures and generally be a more active Forum on your behalf. To this end the following suggestions were put to the members:

- Producing a regular Newsletter (A4 PDF) - say quarterly (Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter) timed to coordinate with members meetings; suggest this is outward facing so in addition to emailing as an attachment to groups, Forum can share more widely
- Having a Digest (email) - say monthly, similar to 'Our Patch'; time-critical information summaries relevant to groups; links to news articles, especially of London based parks
- Using a Facebook Group and/or WhatsApp - two-way communications for day-to-day reminders, queries, events, etc.

LH agreed to canvass opinion from all Groups and see if any consensus can be reached

**Action: LH**

LH continued the discussion by referring to the recently announced Platinum Jubilee Grant scheme from the council. This offers grants up to a maximum of £20k for community based projects in our parks and green spaces. It is opened to various community groups to bid for not just Friends Groups. There is a limit of £40k per ward, so those wards with a large number of Friends Groups may feel slightly disadvantaged. AC reported that the first wave of applications had been delayed to 10<sup>th</sup> November and expectations were that some ten applications would be received. LH requested that members inform Forum of their intentions to bid so that information of a similar nature could be shared. RG had produced an interactive map of both wards and Friends Groups and this would be shared with members. VS explained that the on-line application process required all details to be submitted in one go and this was not overly helpful. VS had produced a quick guide on the questions and responses needed and this too would be shared. **Action: LH**

#### **4.2. Funding Update**

LH reported that the funding team at idverde were finalising the process maps and application forms for Groups to seek external funding for projects. It is hoped that this would be made available within the coming month and that ultimately the whole process will be handled on-line.

Members were reminded that this type of funding should not be confused with the platinum jubilee funding, which was a separate exercise. In principle Groups would only be able to make one application to the jubilee fund and so it was advised that this should be of a higher value to make it worthwhile. Smaller funding requests could be made through other channels such as the Co-op, Waitrose or even Forum.

#### **4.3. Training Update**

LH reported that idverde had recently run a leading workday course and this had been very well received. This was part of idverde's free allocation per year and members suggested this should remain as a de-facto course every year. A tools maintenance course is scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> October, also part of idverde's free allocation.

#### **4.4. Basic Tool Provision**

LH reported that we were still waiting for the definitive list of what defines basic tools from the council. Forum expects this to include PPE, litter pickers and some simple hand tools like secateurs, shears, forks, spades, loppers and bow saws. Along side this Forum has been looking at the provision of hi-vis tabards for all Groups, with the view to finding a sponsor who would be prepared to lend their support in the purchase. We would expect these to have a relatively simple design, which potentially Friends Groups could overprint if they so desired. We would probably provide these in a green colour to distinguish Park Friends from other amenity groups.

### **5. Friends Group Issues**

Not covered in this meeting.

## **6. AOB**

- 6.1. JA asked about the DoE student situation as she had been told they were not allowed. Other members expressed surprise as they have had DoE students working at their site provided they are accompanied by a responsible adult. It was thought that the situation was to do with insurance and as long as a suitable policy and risk assessment was in place there should be no problem
- 6.2. RG referred to a recent leafing email and wondered what its status was. AC confirmed it had originated from her office and Forum was free to circulate.
- 6.3. VS reported that a number of simple plastic/wooded signs at Scadbury had been vandalised and asked whether other Groups had experienced the same problem. Certainly, this and graffiti was a problem and more robust signage would be welcome.
- 6.4. GC reported problems with collection of waste and found the whole issue annoying. LH added that he had reported a damaged bin that needed repair and the FMS solution was to remove the bin completed. Though damaged the bin still functioned as a bin, so this was not the solution expected. A replacement bin seems some months away so one wonders why the damaged bin was taken out of service prematurely. AC remarked that bin collection was managed by Veolia.
- 6.5. LH reported that the Good Parks for London 2022 guide had been published in the last few days and that the Bromley borough had moved from 15<sup>th</sup> last year up to 14<sup>th</sup>. It had improved its score from 39.75 to 42.25. Certainly, this was encouraging news but as the whole guide is very subjective on its scoring mechanisms it was very unlikely Bromley will ever reach top marks. This year's top borough was Southwark with Hackney and Lewisham second and third. The theme of the guide was litter in parks and LH asked AC her views on this with regards Bromley. AC reported that Bromley prided itself as the greener and cleaner borough, so was certainly committed to tackling the issue.

## **7. Date of Next Meeting**

Our next meeting will be our AGM, expected at the end of November, date to be confirmed. It will likely start at 6.30pm and run to 8pm when drinks will be served. It will be held at the Civic Centre with a possible Zoom option.