

Bromley Friends Forum

Minutes of the Members' Meeting held on 16th May 2023
Civic Centre & Via Zoom Video, 7.00pm - 9.00pm

Attendance:

Forum Committee:

[See secretary for details](#)

Friends Group Representatives:

[See secretary for details](#)

Apologies:

[See secretary for details](#)

1. Chairman's Welcome

LH opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance, in particular one or two new faces. A quick introduction by each member present followed.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 7th March 2023 were accepted with the following alteration to section 3.2, para 1, second sentence.

St. Paul's Cray had applied for £58k, which exceeded the amount available to that ward and would therefore be subject to some form of adjustment/limitation.

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

Matters Arising:

§2 WhatsApp Group: RG reported that a Forum WhatsApp Group had been established and to date some 40 members had joined. Action complete.

§3.4 Financial Support: Information about registering Friends Group contact details had been sent out and returns are being processed. Further details are provided in section 3.12 below. Action complete.

§3.4 Dog Poo Dispensers: This has been discussed with the Council/idverde and options are under consideration. Further details are provided in section 3.4 below. Action complete.

§3.4 Event Processing: LH had discussed the matter of valid insurance certificates for Friends organised events with idverde. It was agreed that, where the Friends Group uses the Equity Insurance provisions, then the approval process for the event will take into account that insurance will automatically renew and will therefore be covered. Action complete.

3. Forum News

3.1. Jubilee Parks Fund

LH reported that there were some 10 applications in the second tranche amounting to around £85k. This was substantially less than in the first tranche and continued to show that a number of wards were yet to apply.

The implementation of these projects had been discussed with both the Council and idverde and concerns raised at the level of resources these may require. Forum was assured that there would be sufficient and that steps will be taken to manage the peaks and troughs. Jane Askew, from the Council, has been appointed Project Officer for processing individual applications and is the first point of contact for all enquires. She works 3 days a week on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays.

The third tranche of applications of over £3k has a deadline date of 1st October.

3.2. Treemendous Project

LH reported that the tree team at the Council had planted 1,590 trees this past year as part of their Treemendous Project. The team at the Council had now appointed Gristwood & Toms as contractors to manage and oversee the upkeep of these trees and the move away from Glendale was going well.

QR codes are being installed on the newly planted trees and a public App will shortly be available for download. This will enable users to view details about individual trees, the watering record and other pertinent information. It will also allow for feedback and record incidents, as appropriate.

LH further reported that the tree team had conducted 30,000 tree inspections this year and hoped to undertake 40,000 next year. It is not known what percentage of the borough's trees this represents.

3.3. Trials

LH reported that two trials were planned for this year. The first is a Nature Friendly Verges trial. This was a two-year trial and was currently underway in 11 different sites across the borough. Full details are available on the Council website. In essence these verges will be free from mowing and left to grow to attract a variety of invertebrates. Comments from the general public are encouraged and it is understood that some 70% of those received are favourable.

The second trial is for Sustainable Planting. This will be a three-year trial at 10 sites and will start in the autumn. It is aimed at formal garden settings at places like roundabouts and carriageways and will look at drought resistant and perennial planting.

3.4. Poo Bag Dispensers

VS gave an update on the position of the poo bag dispensers in some of our parks. The cost of providing the bags is some £10k per annum and the current funder is withdrawing their support. It is estimated that 300 bags are used per station per month though some are using as many as 600.

Discussions have been on-going with *idverde* and EcoGreen (a provider) and looking at different ways how this scheme could continue. Possible options are:

- Friends could sponsor directly & have a simple message on the station
- Friends could work with EcoGreen to get sponsorship from the local community
- We find a single sponsor prepared to continue the scheme.

The meeting discussed these options further and by and large it was felt a single sponsor for all was the preferable choice.

3.5. Dog Control Public Spaces Protection Order

LH pointed members to the recently announced consultation on a new Dog Control PSPO.

Under the current (2020-23) Dog Control PSPO Order:

- You may walk no more than 4 dogs without a permit, and up to 6 dogs with a permit (no limit on dogs off or on lead)
- Dogs to be walked on a lead, identified with designated areas
- Dog exclusion areas identified with designated areas as equipped and unequipped playgrounds, enclosed/fenced sports facilities, paddling pools, boating ponds, areas within recreation grounds.

Under new (2023-26) proposals:

- You may walk up to 3 dogs without a permit and up to 4 dogs with a permit (2 of those dogs can be off lead at any time in permitted areas)
- Retaining the same approach to keeping dogs on leads on the public highway and car parks, excluding dogs from children's play areas, and from other designated areas within green spaces. The new proposal is to extend the 'dog on lead' designated areas to include cemeteries, allotments, water bodies, and café seating areas.

The meeting by and large supported the new proposals though the main issue was enforcement. Dogs are seen regularly swimming in ponds and running wild off the lead. It was felt by some that responsible dog owners/handlers can control more than 3 dogs but nevertheless the proposals were a good idea. The consultation closes on Wednesday 31st May.

3.6. Crystal Palace Park

LH reported that the Council had agreed to sign over control of Crystal Palace Park to a board of trustees. This will take effect from 14th September. From that date *idverde* will no longer have any responsibility for the Park. It is not known if this will result in any reduction to their contract. It is also not known whether this will affect the Friends Groups and how they will continue to operate.

3.7. Council Move

LH referred members to the announcement that the Council has exchanged contracts on the Direct Line offices at Bromley South. It is understood that the move away from the Civic Centre will start in earnest at the start of 2024. In the meantime, meeting room availability will remain as is.

3.8. Websites

KR reported that he had been in discussions with the Council and *idverde* about changes/upgrades to both the Council and BromleyParks websites. This has been a long standing issue over a number of years and it seems very little progress in making amendments has been achieved. From the Forum perspective these websites should provide introductory information which then links to the Forum website, which holds the master information on all Friends Groups. This will remove unnecessary duplication and help ensure information is up-to-date by reducing places it needs to be updated.

3.9. Training Courses

LH was grateful to *idverde* for this year's provision of Friends training courses. He reminded members that they need to visit the BromleyParks website to book onto these courses and register their interest. Information will be found on the 'booking' page and then navigate to Friends Forum courses. It was noted that one course is listed as having a cost. Members will need to pay for this in advance but once the course has run and attendance is confirmed, Forum will re-imburse the cost. Some concern was raised as to how *idverde* control attendance and that a course is not filled by just one Friends Group. LH will check with *idverde* to see that limitations are put in place

Action: LH

3.10. Waste Bins

LH reported that the Council is committed to changing all open top waste bins in its parks to ones that restrict access by wildlife. It is expected, however, that this initiative will take up to five years to complete, in part due to lack of funding. There appears to be some difficulty in sourcing some of these bins and this is not helping the rollout position.

3.11. Park Signage

RG reported that there had been little progress on the park signage initiative. After the initial meeting of the working group in November 2022 the situation has hardly moved forward. There has been no assessment reports or follow-up meeting and though a template for auditing purposes has been produced, it remains questionable as to its usability. It needs further review and guidance and decisions taken as to the extent of which parks and green spaces it is used for.

3.12. Friends Group Registrations

LH reported that 18 Groups had returned the registration document and that 15 of these had been paid the £150 support payment. The others will be paid in due course. The 18 returns represented about a third of the 56 Member Groups and LH urged those that hadn't replied to do so. Some members raised concern that they had not received the documentation and this highlighted the need for Forum to check its contact lists and ensure the correct personnel were kept in the know. A reminder would be posted on the WhatsApp group. LH re-iterated that there was no set deadline for application but the preference was to complete the exercise within Forum's financial year which ended on 30th September.

3.13. Biodiversity

The Bromley Biodiversity Partnership met on 15th May and updates on local pertinent matters were discussed. In particular an overview of the work of the London Wildlife Trust was presented and how it overlaps with that of the Kent Wildlife Trust. Members are reminded that articles and the various posters on biodiverse matters are available on the Forum website.

The next meeting of the BBP is scheduled for 18th September. The BBP can be contacted on bromleybiodiversity@gmail.com.

4. Friends Group Issues

4.1. Tugmutton Common: MT reported that they had reported a vandalised notice board on FMS and after investigation the response was that the Friends Group should fix it. LH asked whether this was a board that the Group had installed - to which the reply was no it was not. Clearly this is not something a Friends Group should be expected to do and a worrying trend if repeated. Friends Groups are not there to do *idverde*'s maintenance work and the meeting agreed this needs further clarification. MT confirmed that in this case the Group was ok with making some form of repair, but their query was more about policy and responsibilities. LH agreed to discuss with the Council. **Action: LH**

4.2. Croydon Road Rec: CP raised the issue of commercial events in parks and whether there was some policy concerning making a donation to the Friends Group. And if there is at what level is considered an appropriate payment. The meeting discussed the fact that the fees paid go towards repair and maintenance costs that *idverde* may incur subsequent to the event, but it was felt the event inhibited access to the park to non-event goers and the noise and other factors had a disturbing effect on the neighbourhood. A donation to the Group would give something back to the community and thereby act as some form of compensation. It appears there are many events in Croydon Road Rec and with the Bowie Bandstand set to be restored concern is that there will be many more in the future. The Group commented that some organisers do make a donation but not all, and maybe this should be formalised. LH agreed to discuss with the Council. **Action: LH**

5. AOB

5.1. MM advised the meeting that the Poverest Bath House would be open to the general public on Sunday 23rd July from 11am to 4pm (excl lunch break). Entrance would be free but a donation would be welcome. MM also advised that Scadbury Moated Manor would be open over the weekend 9th/10th September from 2pm-4.30pm. Donations towards the works there would be most welcome.

5.2. KR reported he had been in discussion with WG regarding the resurrection of the Friends Group at Harvington. It seemed to KR that the area has been neglected by *idverde* for some time and would benefit from some new thinking. KR reported that Forum holds about £900 of Harvington's money for safe-keeping and this would be returned once a new Group can be established.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 19th July, starting at 7pm. This will be both in-person at the Civic Centre and on-line via zoom. The portfolio holder, Cllr Aisha Cuthbert, will be invited to attend.