

Bromley Friends Forum

Minutes of the Members' Meeting held on 19th July 2023
Civic Centre & Via Zoom Video, 7.00pm - 9.00pm

Attendance:

Forum Committee:

[See secretary for details](#)

Friends:

[See secretary for details](#)

Guests:

Cllr Aisha Cuthbert (AC) - LBB Portfolio Holder

Apologies:

[See secretary for details](#)

1. Chairman's Welcome

LH opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance, in particular our guest, the portfolio holder. A quick introduction by each member present followed.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 16th May 2023 were accepted with no alterations.

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

Matters Arising:

§3.9 Training Courses: LH had discussed the matter of attendee information with *idverde* and it was agreed Forum would receive details of which Groups were attending and how attendance (when oversubscribed) is managed. To date information has not been forthcoming, which is somewhat disappointing. Action continues. **Action: LH**

§4.1 Tugmutton Common: LH had discussed this with both LBB and *idverde* and it is understood that a resolution has been agreed. LBB acknowledged that reporting of the original FixMyStreet (FMS) could have been dealt with better and will endeavour to improve matters going forward. Action complete.

§4.2 Friends Levy on Commercial Events: LH had discussed this with both LBB and *idverde* and it is understood that this is now under consideration by *idverde*, who are charged with managing the licensing of commercial events. Options as to whether it is a fixed rate or a percentage of profits is yet to be decided. Action continues. **Action: LH**

3. Message from the Portfolio Holder

AC gave a brief update on recent Council activity and then invited questions from members. She explained that there was a full Council meeting earlier in the week where she gave an apology for the poor grass cutting service over recent weeks. These aspects are being discussed with senior staff at *idverde* and it's hoped that improvements will be forthcoming.

She went to explain about the Platinum Jubilee Funding scheme, stating that a significant portion of the fund had now been allocated. Some wards were yet to make an application though it was expected to see these in the next round due on 1st October. It is anticipated that some of the projects will start to be delivered this September.

On a final point AC reported that the Council was going to invest in water bodies (ponds and lakes) across the borough. An additional revenue spend of £50k per annum has been secured along with a capital spend of £2m for desilting/dredging at Kelsey Park. There is also funding for the lake at Church House Gardens and the river at Betts Park.

Questions from the members followed and the discussion focused on trees and the 'treemendous' project. RG asked about the smartphone app that was expected in May and hadn't yet been issued. AC explained that there had been issues with rule stipulations from Apple and this had delayed the release. AC went on to explain that the Council planned to launch promotional material for watering the trees and relay this information to its residents.

Both RG and RA raised concerns about residents/Friends being notified about trees being planted/watered in their location and this didn't seem to be working as intended. Equally information for Tree Friends and the associated toolkit seemed sketchy at best. AC asked for specific examples and she would investigate.

GC asked about damaged tree water bags and how these can be replaced. AC explained these problems should be raised on FMS and they will be attended to. BA asked if the FMS system could be revised to make this category of problem more visible. AC agreed to look at this and add anything pertinent to the 'treemendous' project.

LH asked about the Dog Patrol Protection Order and how this is going to be advertised and presented to the public. AC explained that the commercial dog walkers had already been advised and that the changes do not affect most dog owners. JR had requested better (bigger) signage from *idverde* as some of the Bromley Town parks are entirely dog free whilst others have restricted areas where dogs are not allowed.

BS asked about the poo bag situation and whether the existing scheme will continue. LH explained that VS was progressing this situation and remains ever hopeful that we are close to finding a sponsor, who is prepared to continue the scheme. It is expected this will be limited to 600 bags per station per month, which is considered quite generous. There needs to be some advertising to say these bags are for emergency use only and not for the general public to simply help themselves.

RA asked about faulty playground equipment that had been removed for repair and when these might be replaced. School holidays are upon us and it would be nice to see our playgrounds with a full complement of equipment. AC stated that a possible issue was the backlog on sourcing parts which had delayed matters and it maybe if a Friends Group was happy to accept a slightly different item in their playground this could overcome the delay.

The discussion turned towards the topic of *idverde*'s delivery of the contract. BS was concerned that the Council was too soft on *idverde* and needed to demonstrate that they were the manager. There was concern that some of the Community Managers were not meeting their job description and that they needed to be brought in line. AC agreed to some extent and would discuss further in-house.

AC explained she was happy to come to these meetings and if there was anything else members wished to know they should simply email her and she would respond. AC was thanked for her contribution to the meeting, after which she left.

4. Forum News

4.1. Jubilee Parks Fund

LH opened the discussion on the Jubilee Parks Fund explaining that there was some discrepancy between what the portfolio holder had just said in terms of project approvals and the actual figures. Some of the projects were still being scoped and in some cases the Friends were concerned that quotes from contractors they had provided were being ignored in favour of Council approved contractors only. This was adding to costs and it was felt this was not providing best value for money. Some of the added costs were for items it was felt *idverde*, as our partners in delivering these projects, could provide at preferential rates.

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

4.2. Friends Group Registrations

LH reported that 27 Groups had now returned their registration document and that a further 13 had been chased. This left some 16 or so who were either inactive or unresponsive for whatever reason. JR asked if Bromley Green Gym had responded, and as they had not, would get in touch. PW asked if new Groups without a bank account could be paid. LH explained this was not possible as Forum would not be paying individuals. However, it was possible Forum could make a purchase on their behalf or indeed pay an expense claim which could ease the circumstance. Three new Groups had been identified, these were Chislehurst Cemetery, Green St. Green and Stanhope Park.

4.3. Park Signage

LH reported that a Teams meeting had been scheduled for 7th August for the working party to review the latest situation and hopefully draw some conclusions as to where this project was going. To date there had been little progress and there was some concern that the meeting had been scheduled for an hour, which would seem insufficient time to consider all the aspects of the park signage initiative.

LH added that one or two of the Jubilee Parks Funding projects included signage and it was not clear how this fitted into the bigger picture. There would be some concern if a Friends Group established some form of signage that was incompatible with the rest of the borough. It was felt at the very least the working group should be involved and have a say in their format.

4.4. 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. At the current time one further course this year on invasive species is scheduled for 13th September.

LH also explained that *idverde* was working on producing an on-line version of the leadership course and this should be available for viewing shortly. As such this course is not limited by numbers and will become mandatory viewing for all Groups. It is also expected that it will be mandated annually to ensure skills are kept fresh and renewed as necessary.

LH added that a first aid course has been planned for the autumn and this will be held at the Civic Centre on Monday 23rd October. Invites for this course will be sent out in the coming month.

5. Friends Group Issues

- 5.1. Harvington:** WG reported that a group of local residents were trying to set up a breakaway Friends of Harvington. This 'group' had the support of the local ward councillor but not that of *idverde* nor the Council in general. The 'official' Group were in the process of reforming, revising their constitution and setting up a bank account. They were also organising social events in the park and planned to unveil a plaque to celebrate 70 years of the Mayoral Avenue. There were concerns that the breakaway group were not acting in the best interests of Harvington. *idverde* and the Council plan to hold talks to progress a compromise solution and ensure only one group evolves. KR reported that Forum holds about £900 of Harvington's money for safe-keeping and this would be returned once matters were settled.
- 5.2. Downe Orchard:** ZK apologised for not attending Forum for a while but matters have settled down now she hopes Downe Orchard will have a more regular representation. They have an income stream by selling apple juice from the 80 trees they have and wondered whether they should be accepting funding from the Forum. LH confirmed that the money is there and Forum wants to support all its Member Groups.
- 5.3. Darrick & Newstead Woods:** BS reported continual problems with their Green Flag flagpole. This is constantly vandalised and they are at a loss as to what to do. *idverde* does not allow them to introduce anti-vandal measures and BS sought suggestions from the meeting what can be done. RA referred to a document on-line called 'Decent Parks? Decent Behaviour?' which might have some suggestions of what could be done.
- 5.4. Pratts Bottom:** PH reported that they had been successful in their bid to the Jubilee Parks Fund and they were looking forward to implementing their revised play area. They were also pleased to report that a film company had decided to use their village hall for the setting of documentary on the Post Office scandal, and as a result it had been freshly painted both in and out. They also received £500 for replacing bunting after they had taken it down, as the film company wanted it in their shots of the village.

6. AOB

- 6.1.** 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.

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- 6.2.** JR asked about having drones in parks. The meeting confirmed that this was not allowed unless it was on a commercial basis and a licence fee/donation was forthcoming.
- 6.3.** 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.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 21st September starting at 7pm. This will be both in-person at the Civic Centre and on-line via zoom.