

Bromley Friends Forum

Minutes of the Members' Meeting held on 24th September 2024
Civic Centre & Via Zoom Video, 7.00pm - 9.00pm

Attendance

Forum Committee:

Please refer to secretary for details

Friends:

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. A quick introduction of each member present followed.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 16th May 2024 were accepted with no alterations. The minutes would be revised with full names removed prior to publication on the Forum website.

Matters Arising:

§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. Still under discussion. Action continues. **Action: LH**

§2 Hi-Vis jackets: The Forum had purchased a sample set of hi-vis vests and these were presented to the meeting. Approval was given to purchase a larger batch for distribution amongst Groups. These would be provided free of charge. LH to seek numbers from members and order accordingly. Action complete.

§2 Events training course: LH had discussed this with idverde who were looking at providing a slimmed down version of a course proposed by Lollipop Events. It was likely that this would be in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. Action continues.

Action: LH

§4.7 Vehicle damage to verges: This had been raised with idverde, who are aware of the problem. They will endeavour to train their staff to be more careful and vigilant. Countryside staff have taken the view not to drive on park land, but to park up in the nearby car-park. Action complete.

3. Forum News

3.1. Council Update

- LH reported that there have been some staffing changes at idverde. Penny Read had now retired and Anita Zambaldo resigned. They have been replaced by Winnie Motoko and Nikki Ilyayi respectively. It would appear that they have no parks experience but are purely relationship managers. This is some concern to Forum.
- The Jubilee Parks Fund had now offered projects to the value of £760k. A fair number had already completed and only a handful of wards are yet to bid for some of the outstanding funding. The most recent wave of applications took place on 1st October and it is expected that a final one will take place on 31st December.
- LBB had recently conducted a parks satisfaction survey from residents of the borough and it is understood it had received some 350 replies. This is not a huge number but I guess it's a start. Analysis of the results is awaited.

LH reported that LBB's Nature Friendly verges trial is continuing this year as is their Sustainable Planting trial. JJ added that the Nature Friendly verges trial was coming to an end soon and members should send in their comments of support plus any suggestions for new verges.

LH gave an update on some of the infrastructure projects the Council is currently looking at. These include repair to the bridges at Kelsey Park, the erection of the Hoblingwell Perimeter Fence, further works at the Scadbury Moated Manor, desilting of the Kelsey Lakes, improvement works to the Mottingham Sports Ground.

LH also reported on the installation of two 'Changing Places' toilets. One at High Elms and one at Crystal Palace Park. These support people with complex and multiple physical and learning disabilities and are not open to the general public.

3.2. Parks Signage

DA asked about an update on the Park Signage audit. LH reported that little progress had been made to completing the audit and a large number of sites remained unaudited. Idverde had suggested they would fill the gaps but it appears unlikely that this will actually happen. Some discussion followed where it was evident there were no funds available at the present time to replace any signs. It will be reviewed at the next partnership meeting and a decision taken as to any future steps.

3.3. Unsupervised Volunteer Hours

LH presented to the meeting a form for capturing unsupervised volunteer hours that Angela Wood had created and asked for feedback. From Forum's prospective the form looked overly fussy and involved more than just the hours. It included H&S aspects, risk assessments, leaders and first aiders. It all seems a little unnecessary and would to some extent duplicate the work of the quarterly stats collection. LH will be meeting with idverde to discuss this matter further. After some discussion members appeared to agree that the form was unworkable in its current form.

In addition, Jackie Baxter, had put together a H&S video for Park Friends, which appeared to be overly onerous and likely to put volunteers off rather than gain new ones. It is understood this should tie in with the leading a work party training video, that is yet to be issued. There seems to be a new push on H&S matters and in effect treating volunteers more like staff.

3.4. Financial Support

LH reminded members of Forum's new policy on Small Grants and urged members to submit an application to them. Forum's financial year end is 30th Sept so it would be good to receive any pending requests by then.

3.5. Training

LH reported that Forum had arranged to run two first aid courses, on 17th October and 18th November. At the time of the meeting these were under sub-scribed and additional candidates would be welcome.

Idverde has one further course to run this year, hedge laying on 23rd October. They are still working on the online leadership course, which we hope will be available by the end of the year.

3.6. Biodiversity

JJ requested that any toad or hedgehog sightings should be reported and details sent to her as soon as possible.

JJ also asked if anybody knows who owns some land in Anerley known as James Dixon Rec on GoParks. It would be good to survey this area and get an understanding of the wildlife there. Members suggested JJ asks the Land Registry for advice.

4. Friends Group Reports

4.1. Keston Common: LH reported that Keston was one of the successful applicants to the Jubilee Fund and has had its playground revamped with some new equipment. A Community Action Day was held on 26th July to paint some of the older equipment and do a general tidy-up of the area. It was well supported by idverde staff.

We have installed two new interpretation boards, one at Pond 3 to explain the wildlife there and one at Caesar's Well to give some detail of its history and hydrology.

Ben Jarvis is our site manager and with his background in waterworks he has big ideas for our ponds. With support from the Council he has applied for grant money to undertake feasibility studies on what can and can't be achieved. Ideas include naturalising the waters edge, converting one pond to a wetland area, closing off certain pathways, desilting, introducing small islands and building fishing stations.

The Friends retained their Green Flag for 2024/25 and an active group of core volunteers meets every Friday morning to undertake maintenance tasks across the site. The Friends organise a monthly walk on the first Wednesday of the month starting at 2pm. All are welcome to join us.

4.2. Jubilee Country Park: PR explained that they had received a Jubilee Fund grant to plant an orchard. They wanted this to have native trees from Kent but due to delays imposed by LBB the trees received were not native to Kent. Notice boards now needed but due to delays and increased costs the Group is £700 short. LH suggested Jubilee makes a grant application to meet some of the cost.

4.3. Hoblingwell Wood: RA reported that Hoblingwell had had a good summer with lots of positive usage of the amenities. Butterfly counts have been good, especially considering national trends are down. Parkrun celebrated their seventh anniversary in July. Numbers for both parkrun and junior parkrun have been strong.

In spring, the Friends planted 63metres of mixed native species hedging as part of their Hedgerow Heroes project, supported by CPRE London. These have established well over the summer.

The Friends have held monthly family wildlife walk and talk events, as well as a summer evening walk which was very well attended. These have gone very well. The last for this season will be held at 11am on the first Saturday of October.

During the summer holiday we had additional activities for children on two days with Superzones at the Pump Track seeing free street art, crafts, inflatables, skateboarding and BMX sessions.

Installation of the perimeter rail is now essentially complete. We currently have a playground consultation survey to support fundraising to improve the Playground. Please do share with your communities.

4.4. Bromley Town Parks: JR reported that playground in Queensmead has been installed and the Bromley Mayor came to open it.

JR reported that they are now finalising costings with the Council on a Jubilee Parks Fund bid to upgrade Bromley Palace Park. They are fortunate to border on two different wards so some money is available from each to meet there 20k. Work should start in the Autumn and will include a series of information boards. Some concern about access once the re-development of the Civic Centre site starts.

Looking to naturalise the river at Queensmead and put it back to how it was before all the ramps were installed. Work would involve the Environment Agency, Thames 21 and other interested parties. Also looking at work to de-silt lakes at Churchill Gardens.

4.5. Downe Orchard: MT reported that they were entering a busy period as it was time for harvesting the apples. They feel that better and good signage would help them recruit more volunteers to overcome the harvesting issues. Apples are sent off for juicing which brings in some funds. There is a core Group of volunteers and in the main they are self sufficient. They are able to donate fund back into the community, in particular the school and the village hall, both of which they use from time to time.

In the summer they asked idverde to maintain their public access but needed to resort to FMS to ensure the task was completed. Additionally idverde's mowing of the area was a little over zealous and some damage to trees did occur. MT also reported that climate change was having a bearing on the trees and would seek advice from idverde on how to best move forward in the future.

4.6. South Hill Wood / Kingswood Glen: DA reported that they have made some improvements to the entrance at Kingswood Glen, new paint work and strimming of grassland area.

At South Hill Wood have spent time sweeping up grass cuttings left by idverde to make the area look a lot tidier. Had a litter pick session with the Mayor and more recently a councillor joined the Group so now have good in roads to the Council.

Major event set for 12th October to celebrate their 15th anniversary.

4.7. Darrick & Newstead Woods: MS reported that they had attended the fete at Beeche on 1st Sept but didn't raise a great deal of money due in part to low turnout. They have retained their Green Flag status but continue to have issues with the actual flag, where some residents object to its position in the woods.

Through the Jubilee Parks fund they have managed to resurface some of their muddy pathways. Not overly pleased with how this went/looked but need to wait to see if it works as intended, i.e. reduces the build up of mud.

On-going problem with quad bikes in the woods and liaising with police to try to identify the culprits.

4.8. Chislehurst & Walden Rec: BA reported that they held a couple of very successful events - Petal & Paws (combining a dog show with a plant sale) and Chislehurst Rocks. The latter has now become quite a major headache with lots of new H&S rules, the area had to be fenced off and ticketed. Rules on bringing drinks in also needed to be controlled.

Still some on-going issues with idverde staff stimming where they shouldn't and generally not organising themselves properly.

4.9. Chislehurst Commons: BK reported that the Group continues to meet every week and recent tasks have concentrated on the grasslands and the ponds. They have organised family days for kids to undertake simple tasks.

Major event on the Common called Chislehurst Creates. Mainly concentrating on crafts. Organised via collaboration with other interest parties in the area.

Now need to develop new management plan for the next ten years. Amazing how things have changed since the last ten years. The Commons has suffered greatly with tree deceases and it's costing a vast sum of money in tree contractors to manage the issue.

4.10. Priory Gardens: RG reported that they have replanted one of the gardens with support from Coolings.

Our bid to the Jubilee Parks Fund to restore parts of the gardens required planning permission, which we pleased to report we have received in the past week. This has obviously delayed the start but expect things to move forward from now on.

4.11. Winsford Gardens: KR reported that they are a relatively small area but its membership meets regularly once a week and undertakes a variety of gardening tasks. Over the years they have made considerable upgrades to the gardens and they are beginning to wonder what more they can do there.

We hold a very successful open day each year and currently have some £5k in the bank. The committee needs to think carefully on what they can spend this money on. Idverde are not keen for more infrastructure to be placed in the gardens, so it limits what can be done.

4.12. ODAS: MM reported that ODAS is extremely busy and had undertaken a number of events. The Roman Bathhouse in Poverest Road was opened to the public as part of the London Festival of Architecture and also as part of the National Festival of Archaeology when they had 101 visitors. They also showed two pre booked groups around the site.

ODAS opened the Scadbury Moated Manor to the public as part of London Festival of Architecture and as part of Heritage Open Days and Open City (London Open House) when they had 935 visitors around the manor in two afternoons. Three pre booked groups were also shown around.

5. AOB

5.1. PW reported that Fields in Trust had a major survey in circulation and urged members to complete such surveys to improve the quality of data held by institutions such as GiGL & CPRE.

https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=NJCUDoYX1UK_Np7KCs08rWE5UB58DfBGqP0_vqjkFFpUQVU5NEdSNUIRRTVURUFUUE9BVFdGRjBMRS4u&route=shorturl

5.2. A new Group covering Foxes Field in Mottingham is under consideration.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be our AGM on Thursday 28th November starting at 6.30pm. This will be an in-person only meeting and light refreshments will be served after the main business around 8pm. The meeting should conclude by 9pm. It will be held at the Civic Centre in Stockwell Close, Committee Room 1.