

Bromley Friends Forum

Minutes of the Members' Meeting held on 26th February 2026
Civic Centre & Via Teams Video, 7.00pm - 9.00pm

Attendance

Forum Committee:

[See secretary for details](#)

Friends:

[See secretary for details](#)

Apologies:

[See secretary for details](#)

1. Chairman's Welcome

LH opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 25th September 2025 were accepted with no alterations. The minutes would be revised with full names removed prior to publication on the Forum website.

Matters Arising: None.

3. Forum News

3.1. Council / idverde Update

LH reported that the council continues to face significant financial challenges from 2026 onwards. The budget gap for 2026/27 is projected at £55.7M, which exceeds the current environment portfolio budget of approximately £44M. Reserves are currently being used to fund the gap but this can't be sustained long-term.

The Council Executive agreed to extend the idverde contract and intends to consult the Friends Forum on future management approaches, opportunities to reduce costs and priority areas for the contract period. The new eight-year contract will commence in April 2027.

As a consequence of the Nature Friendly Verges Trial, 8 sites have now been made permanent and 4 new ones added to the trial. The Sustainable Planting trial remains on-going and a formal report outlining the trial's outcomes and recommendations will be presented to the Council in late spring/early summer.

Within the Jubilee Parks Fund 59 projects have been completed, 2 are in the process of completing and 3 remain outstanding (Shaftesbury Park, Biggin Hill Rec and Well Wood).

Work is underway to complete the Green Flag applications. All previous sites are included along with a re-application for Scadbury Park and the addition of Jubilee

Country Park. Hoblingwell Wood is being upgraded to the full Green Flag award from last year's Community award.

3.2. Parks Engagement Co-Ordinators

As reported at our AGM idverde has taken the decision to replace their three Community Managers with two Parks Engagement Officers. These new roles will involve much greater hands-on experience and managerial working and hopefully be better placed to support Friends.

Idverde have also decided to involve Forum in the interview process and LH confirmed that we have held discussions with five candidates. Subsequently idverde have made offers to two successful candidates, Vicy West and Katy Berry. Vicy will be joining the team on 2nd March and cover the west of the borough whilst Katy will join on 1st April and cover the east of the borough.

The meeting requested a job description document for these roles so that Friends could fully understand what they can expect and how the role will function.

The meeting also proposed that the candidates, along with Angela Wood, be invited to the next members' meeting. This would help each other's understanding of what the role entailed and provide an opportunity to respond to any concerns.

Action: LH

3.3. Grounds Maintenance

LH reported that he has been in discussion with Mark Garthwaite over grass cutting arrangements and it was agreed that the grounds maintenance team will hold prior meetings with concerned Friends Groups to try and resolve issues before they occur. Nine areas have been initially identified and these are: Biggin Hill, Chislehurst Rec, Green St. Green, Havelock Rec, Hoblingwell, Petts Wood Rec, Priory Gardens, Whitehall Rec and Winsford Gardens.

Members present confirmed that some of these meetings had already taken place and had proved extremely useful. JR requested that Martins Hill is added to the list for discussion.

3.4. Training

LH reported that Forum had held discussions with idverde about holding some of the five training courses they provide in the evening or at a weekend. This would hopefully enable more Friends to attend and thereby make the courses more productive. Although no decision on actual topics had yet been agreed the meeting was keen that a course on leading a work party was made available. It was hoped that this type of course could be provided on-line and completed by Friends at any time.

LH planned to hold two further first aid courses this spring, though due to restricted room availability during the local election period, these would have to be mid-May/June time. Members were also keen that some of these courses were made available at weekends and it may be an alternative trainer is sought or an on-line version considered. SG confirmed she has an out of hours contact if members wish to get in touch.

3.5. Financial Support

LH reminded members of Forum's 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.

IT gave a brief update on his plans for the Group wide insurance policy. It was felt that the basic offering from Unity did not provide good value for money and that considerable savings could be achieved from an alternative supplier. However, those Groups with 'additional' cover might make a change more challenging to achieve and the status quo might prevail. Any cost savings would of course be fed back into the business and hence be very beneficial.

3.6. Biodiversity

CG reported that the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) are running surveys for April to June this year on green spaces in urban / suburban environments. Some of the spaces highlighted in LBB include recreation grounds and parks that have Friends Groups, together with other smaller green spaces. Full details can be found on the BTO website - <https://www.bto.org/get-involved/volunteer/projects/greenspaces>.

CG referred to the species posters for recording sightings across the borough. These contained an outdated QR code and as a consequence will require updating. Ben Jarvis was aware that they need to be updated but it was noted that users can still use the form in the meantime. Consideration to add further species to the collection is currently underway, for example a poplar hawk-moth.

CG commented that the Bromley Biodiversity Plan expires this year and is subject to revision. It is likely that the local plan will need to be finalised beforehand. Friends Groups will have an opportunity to appraise any revision, especially in regard of case studies in their area.

4. Friends Group Reports

4.1. Bromley Town Parks: JR reported that they had held discussions with Grounds Maintenance, following concerns raised at the AGM, and they were pleased to report they had supported their work at Church House Gardens, including clearing invasive vegetation.

JR also reported that they had had an on-site meeting in Church House Gardens on 3rd

Feb with senior members of both the Council and idverde. This meeting reviewed the status and future plans for that site. This concentrated on the restoration of the lake, which had dried out last summer. A Veolia grant of £75k has been applied for, for the planning and surveying work as opposed to actual implementation. A decision on whether this has been successful is expected in the next week or so.

On a slightly negative side discussions are on-going about the provision of a tool store for Martins Hill, as the proposed site (the Walled Garden) is subject to disposal by the estates department. An alternative would be to provide a shipping container, and this was being progressed by David Braybrook.

JR also reported that they had had problems with tree branches being cut and left in-situ and after raising concerns the Council had agreed to stack these appropriately out of harm's way.

The Group is holding an Arts & Activism event on Saturday 18th April in the auditorium (amphitheatre) of Church House Gardens.

In conclusion things have improved and regular work parties are continuing with a good number of volunteers and renewed enthusiasm.

- 4.2. Crofton & Sparrow Woods:** JA reported that they had applied to Elms4London for elm trees and had received three trees but have now found problems with the tree team as to where to plant them. Hopefully this will be resolved in the very near future.

The Group is planning to host an Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Saturday (4th April). Looking for support and ideas on how to ensure success.

Having finally got permission to restore their painted sundial and now looking at crowd-funding to support the installation process. Any help from Groups with experience of using crowd-funding would be appreciated.

JA also reported that they have installed a number of bat boxes and now looking at installing an interpretation board. Preferred suppliers suggested by idverde seem a tad expensive and looking to see what other Groups have done. As long as you do artwork in-house, costs can be kept at reasonable levels.

- 4.3. Priory Gardens:** RG reported that they had had a meeting with idverde and the Council which proved helpful in the sense that it explained to the Council what the Group actually did. RG therefore recommended that any site meeting should include a Council officer to re-iterate what volunteers can achieve.

RG asked if any members had experience of restoring crumbling heritage brickwork. Recent patch repairs use new materials with a variety of bricks and the result is not very pleasing. It is believed that the wall is listed so there should be sufficient care and concern to retain a uniform look.

4.4. Tugmutten Rec: MT reported that their site is partially urban and partially countryside and it seems idverde have difficulty deciding who should be managing it. More recently Irena Semenove has been helping out and they wondered whether this would become a more permanent arrangement. Contacting Angela Wood on the urban side seems more problematic. The Group generally meets on a Saturday morning and this doesn't help the situation re idverde staff.

4.5. Downe Orchard: ZK reported that their Group would be delighted to come to any Friends event and provide their apple juice for sale. It has been another bumper year for fruit and they have an abundance of product available. Litre bottles are £3.50 or a case of six for £20. Shelf life is to 2027. For further details contact:
orchard@downe-kent.org.uk.

5. AOB

5.1. LH asked members if they were happy with the WhatsApp Group as there was concern some of the postings were not parks related. Feedback was generally very happy.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday 23rd April starting at 7pm. It will be held at the new Civic Centre in Westmoreland Road, Committee Room 1, and will be both in-person and on-line via Microsoft Teams