

FRIENDS FORUM OF BROMLEY PARKS & GREEN SPACES

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Via Microsoft Teams, Wednesday, 12th May 2021, 6.30pm-8pm

1. Introduction and welcome of the Committee

Chairman, Larry Herbert (LH), opened the meeting, thanked *idverde* for arranging the evening's event and welcomed guests and those present. He was especially pleased to welcome new members to the proceedings. Attention was drawn to the documents that were issued with the invite and that these would be referred to as the meeting progressed.

2. Present / Apologies

Forum Committee:

Larry Herbert (LH)	Chair, Friends of Keston Common
Keith Rodwell (KR)	Vice-chair, Friends of Winsford Gardens
John Cutting (JC)	Treasurer, Friends of Kelsey Park
Barbara Arora (BA)	Friends of Chislehurst & Walden Rec
Sandy Goddard (SG)	Friends of Whitehall Rec
Vivien Smith (VS)	Friends of Scadbury Park

Members:

Alan Wilmot, Kelsey Park	Brian Knights, Chislehurst Commons
Brian Street, Darrick & Newstead Woods	David, Crystal Palace Park
Francis Bernstein (FB), Crystal Palace	Gregor Campbell (GC), Willett Rec
Jason Glen, Norman Park	Jeff Royce (JR), Bromley Town Parks
John Bruce (JB), Jubilee Country Park	John Ince (JI), Friends of Hoblingwell Wood
Karen King (KK), Crofton & Sparrow Woods	Kirsty Blackman, Crofton & Sparrow Woods
Louise Thompson	Mike Titheridge, Tugmutton Rec
Millie Knights (MK), Cator Park	Peter Anderson, Kelsey Park
Peter White, South Hill Wood	Peter Woodward, Chislehurst Commons
Wendy Gowlett, Harvington	

idverde:

Frank Kleinhans (FK)	Andy Hodgson (AH)
John Pemberton (JP)	Andrew Harby
Angela Wood	Carroll Long
Donna Cook	Ian Wright
Penny Read	Sue Holland

Bromley Council:

James Hilsden (JH), Environmental and Community Services

Apologies:

Kari Silvester	Forum Officer, Friends of Bromley Town Parks
Richard Gibbons	Forum Officer, Friends of Priory Gardens

Alison Stammers, Chislehurst & Walden Rec
Julie Covill, Chislehurst & Walden Rec
Mai Bunce, Chislehurst & Walden Rec

3. Minutes of the last AGM held on 20th November 2019

The minutes of the last AGM were accepted without comment or error. There were no matters arising.

JR proposed and BA seconded. LH stated that the minutes would now be made available in the public domain on the Forum website, following minor editing to remove names.

4. Presentation of the Committee's Annual Report

LH referred to Forum's annual report which covered the period 1st Oct 2019 to 30 September 2020. The year had started with great promise - lots of exciting plans and projects under consideration. However, the Covid-19 pandemic arrived and by March 2020 progress came to much of a standstill. Our communications with LBB and *idverde* dropped off and we were unable to host our members' meetings in the usual way.

LH explained that he didn't plan to present Forum's report any further and hoped that members had read it and found it of some value. LH invited questions:

Questions about the Committee Report:

Q: JR stated the report says there were no biodiversity meetings but one was held on 9th March 2021?

A: LH acknowledged this but explained this occurred after the scope of the report and hence was not included.

Q: GC asked if the stakeholder panel meetings were still working? Also what is the situation with partnership meetings.

A: LH confirmed they were and that the terms of reference for the panel were in the process of being re-worked to ensure their continued viability. At the moment stakeholder meetings are held every six months with update reports being produced in between time. The last meeting was held on 9th February 2021 and the next is planned for 20th July 2021. Partnership meetings continue on a regular three monthly cycle and provide a useful exchange of information. It is hoped that the partnership statement (defining the agreement between LBB, *idverde* and Forum) will be signed off and issued to members in the very near future.

5. Presentation and Adoption of the Annual Accounts

JC presented the accounts referring to both the accounts statement and his report that had been issued for this meeting. Over the year Forum had received a total income of £5,000 with an expenditure of £1,715. The Committee is grateful to LBB/*idverde* for continuing to pay Forum's annual grant of £5,000.

The under-spend was in part due to the pandemic but since the end of the year payments of £3,200 had been made to Member Groups which has reduced our bank balance to around the £6k mark. Though this remains quite large the committee needs to safeguard funds for future use, as funding can never be fully guaranteed.

JC went on to explain that our accounts examiner had now stood down and that the treasurer from Jubilee Country Park had stepped forward to take on this role. JC also stated that this year would be his last as treasurer and that he plans to stand down at our AGM in November 2021. Tony Allen from Scadbury Park has offered to stand for election as Forum treasurer in November though the post remains open for the time being to other members to apply.

Questions about the Accounts:

Q: MK referred to the £3,400 paid to Groups in the 2018/19 year and asked about Forum's income and whether it increased when the number of Groups increased?

A: LH replied that Forum's income had been fixed at £5K for some time and that it was unlikely to increase especially in the current financial climate. Forum would look to have a conversation with the Council about the grant at some future date. The reason Forum paid only £3,400 was that that not all Groups received the £100, some because they didn't ask for it and some because they don't have bank accounts.

The Accounts were then formally adopted: proposed by JR; seconded by JI.

6. Approval of Independent Examiner

JB outlined the details of our independent examiner, Peter Runacres (treasurer at Jubilee Country Park), his qualifications and that he had agreed to undertake the role for the coming year. Approval and election for next year was agreed by all.

7. Election of Committee

LH outlined the procedure for the election/re-election of the new Chairman and committee members:

Nominees for the general member roles were as follows and all were taken en-bloc:

Barbara Arora, Chislehurst & Walden Rec
Kari Silvester, Bromley Town Parks & Gardens
Richard Gibbons, Priory Gardens
Sandy Goddard, Whitehall Rec
Vivien Smith, Scadbury Park

A vote of approval by members was called with unanimous agreement for all nominees.

Nominees for the major officer roles were as follows and all were taken en-bloc

Chairman: Larry Herbert, Keston Common
Vice Chairman: Keith Rodwell, Winsford Gardens
Treasurer: John Cutting, Kelsey Park

A vote of approval by members was called with unanimous agreement.

8. idverde Report

FK referred to *idverde*'s annual report which had been distributed in advance of the meeting and invited questions.

Questions for idverde:

Q: BA asked if *idverde* could explain the reported figure of 5672 hours of supervised hours?

A: JP explained that these were volunteer hours and included effort from groups who were not necessarily Friends Groups. In a normal year the figure would include details from commercial partners as well but in 2020 none had been recorded.

Q: BA asked why a road map was required to redraft the OSS, why it wasn't just happening?

A: FK replied that they were in discussion with the Council as to how to proceed with the re-draft and that final agreements were yet to be taken. JH went on to explain that following the consultation period a huge amount of comment was received and that a process of data analysis was taking place to identify the areas of concern. All stakeholders would be contacted shortly (including Forum) and the process of taking the OSS forward agreed.

Q: BA asked about fund-raising targets and how these were being met?

A: FK replied that *idverde* had a ten-year target of 2.5M, so 250K per annum. In recent years there has been quite a high demand and they had increased the fund-raising team to meet the need. The plan was to aim higher than the £250K figure.

Q: MK asked how do you get a supervisor?

A: FK explained that supervision was based on complexity of the task and that simple activities such as litter picking would not warrant a supervised session. Obviously more complex tasks or tasks at a sensitive site would require supervision and Groups should make enquiries through their community manager.

Q: MK asked when the biodiversity action plan would be published?

A: FK explained that there was an internal *idverde* biodiversity plan which outlined internal processes that *idverde* needed to adhere to, which would not be published. JP said that the Bromley wide biodiversity plan was still being discussed in committee and that it may not be until the last quarter of the year until it is published.

9. Bromley Council Report

JH gave a report from the Council's perspective, which had not been distributed in advance. JH explained that it had been a difficult year and that they had had to follow changing government guidance at various points in the year. They had had internal discussions about the importance of parks and green spaces during lockdown and making sure that these were accessible to all.

The Council was most grateful to *idverde* for their response to the situation and should be commended for their hard work and dedication to continue to provide a fully managed service. Together they had produced a number of communiqués for distribution to Friends Groups which allowed for volunteering work to continue under difficult circumstances.

JH explained that the Council's neighbourhood officers had continued with their inspection duties, albeit working from home. Again, *idverde* were thanked for supporting this work and ensuring operations continued in a smooth and coherent manner.

JH was also most grateful to all Friends Groups for their efforts in making parks and green spaces a welcoming place to visit during lockdown. Their actions in response to changing procedures and circumstances was much appreciated.

JH was also grateful to Ward Security for all their work in monitoring the parks, checking on social distancing and posting the various guidance notices. It was noted that Toby Smith is retiring at the end of May and LBB were currently looking at finding his replacement.

JH reported that the re-draft of the OSS will take its time and that as yet *idverde* had not been fully informed of all the various implications of that re-draft. It is expected that engagement sessions with stakeholders will be taking place shortly and that the process will move forward once these had been completed.

Questions for the Council:

Q: KK asked if litter picking was covered under the Council liability policy?

A: FK clarified that it is not covered under Council liability but it is covered under the insurance policy that idverde provides and funds for its Friends Groups.

MK wished to thank Ward Security for all the help they had given Cator Park.

JR wished to show appreciation to all the on-site staff for their efforts in our parks and green spaces during lockdown.

10. Questions & Answers

Q: FB, when moving out of lockdown what new activities are Ward Security expected to do outside of parks. Are they spending less time on park controls now?

A: JH replied that Ward has 4 to 5 staff for the whole of the borough and so their efforts are spread quite thin. They continue to do dog patrols of parks and locking of gates and other anti-social activities that do not involve the police. JH was not aware of any new initiatives but is happy to discuss this at a later date.

Q: LH asked about Covid messages in our parks. What were the plans for revising/removing these as some had provoked an adverse reaction and were considered as scaremongering?

A: JH stated no scaremongering was intended. The Council have to and need to highlight the risk and so will continue to provide information for as long as is necessary according to government guidelines. It is expected that new signs will continue for some time to come, especially whilst the younger generation remain un-vaccinated.

Q: KK asked that outdoor gyms had been forced to close due to Covid, when will these be allowed to open?

A: AH stated that all outdoor gyms are now open.

11. Any Other Business

MK asked about seeing more details about the maintenance contract. JH replied that a redacted version of the contract had been under discussion with the Forum but due to Covid had been put on hold. It is hoped further discussions will take place and an agreement can be reached. In the meantime, the community managers are there to assist and help.

MK offered a vote of thanks to the chair.

12. Close

LH thanked members for their attendance and wished them well.

It is expected that the next members' meeting will be mid July 2021 (tbc). The next Forum AGM is scheduled for November 2021.