

FRIENDS FORUM OF BROMLEY PARKS & GREEN SPACES

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Civic Centre, Bromley, Wednesday, 20th November 2019, 6.30pm-8pm

1. Introduction and welcome of the Committee

Chairman, LH, opened the meeting, welcomed guests and those present and outlined the format for the evening and explained the voting system. He was especially pleased to welcome new members to the proceedings. Attention was drawn to the handout that was given out at registration.

2. Present / Apologies

Forum Committee:

Refer to secretary for details

Members:

Refer to secretary for details

idverde:

Refer to secretary for details

Bromley Council:

Refer to secretary for details

Guests:

Refer to secretary for details

Apologies:

Refer to secretary for details

3. Minutes of the last AGM held on 21st November 2018

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

PWh proposed and JR 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

KR presented Forum's review of the year. Topics covered included highlights of the year, working partnerships, links with other parties and the year ahead. KR also gave a detailed overview of the training undertaken in 2019 and the small grants offered to a number of Friends Groups. A copy of the slides will be posted onto the Forum website and accompany these minutes.

LH wished to record Forum's thanks to Darren Russell for his years of service to the Forum Committee. Darren was particularly keen on bringing the youth element to the table and had undertaken a number of successful projects with a variety of Groups. Darren had resigned his post earlier in the year and was now concentrating on his work with idverde.

Questions about the Committee Report:

None.

5. Presentation and Adoption of the Annual Accounts

In JC's absence LH presented the accounts. Over the year Forum had received a total income of £5,030 with an expenditure of £7,267. The Committee is grateful to LBB/idverde for continuing to pay Forum's annual grant of £5,000.

The main items of expenditure in the year were £3,400 in supporting Friends Groups, £1,270 on training and £1,314 on small grants. £674 was spent on catering Forum's 2018 AGM and £218 on Indemnity Insurance for the Forum Committee. The administration of Forum for the year is in the region of £300.

LH reported that the over-spend had reduced Forum's financial assets from £9,003 to £6,766 and that this trend was likely to continue over the coming year. It was expected that expenditure on small grants would continue to increase whilst direct financial support to Groups would be curtailed. Training costs and other expenditure would by and large remain the same.

Though the bank balance (£6,766) at 30th September remains quite large the committee needs to safeguard funds for future use, as funding can never be fully guaranteed.

Questions about the Accounts:

Q: JR asked about the position on small grants and whether these would continue?

A: LH replied that the Committee were committed to offering more small grants and indeed would look at whether the policy of 20% to a maximum of £300 should be reviewed and revised upwards.

The Accounts were then formally adopted: proposed by BS; seconded by DJ.

6. Approval of Independent Examiner

LH outlined the details of our independent examiner, Alan Kienlen, his qualifications and that he had agreed to continue for a further year. Approval and re-election for next year was agreed: proposed by JR; seconded by JB.

7. Election of Committee

PP took the Chair to oversee the election/re-election of the new Chairman and committee members: Nominees for the major officer roles were as follows and all were taken en-bloc

Chairman:	LH, Keston Common
Vice Chairman:	KR, Winsford Gardens
Treasurer:	JC, Kelsey Park

Nominees for major officer roles were proposed by JR and seconded by AW. A vote of approval by members was called with unanimous agreement.

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

KS, Bromley Town Parks & Gardens

RG, Priory Gardens

SG, Whitehall Rec

VS, Scadbury Park

In addition, BA, Chislehurst Commons, was nominated from the floor by MB and seconded by JG. A vote of approval by members was called with unanimous agreement for all nominees.

LH retook the Chair.

8. idverde Presentation

AR initiated *idverde*'s presentation on 'Scadbury Moated Manor', supported by AHa and JaC. A copy of the slides will be posted onto the Forum website and accompany these minutes.

AR concluded the talk by referring to grant opportunities and that two Fund Raising Surgeries have been scheduled for the morning of Tuesday 7th January and the afternoon/evening of Monday 13th January.

Questions for idverde:

Q: JG asked how many projects can you support?

A: AR replied that this depended on a number of factors, complexity, size etc. As an approximation six large projects could be supported in the year.

Q: TB referred to a meeting with Historic England about the Rockeries in Palace Gardens and whether any decision had yet been taken?

A: AR replied that there was no news/update and that the issue remained with the Conservation Officer within LBB

Q: VS asked who is the decision maker?

A: AR replied that each project was looked at in its own merit and those with the strongest business case were more likely to be successful. The senior management team for the site would ultimately decide.

9. Bromley Council Presentation

LH invited WH-T and JH to say a few words on behalf of the Council. JH started proceedings explaining some of the background to the new contract and how behind the scenes strategy discussions were taking place. Together with *idverde* they were working to build a better Bromley. New monitoring processes were now in place and as a fully managed service they were very much working as partners.

WH-T, Portfolio Holder for the Environment thanked all volunteers for their hard work and commitment over the past year. He emphasised the Council's commitment to its Friends and had set a target for Bromley to be carbon neutral by 2029.

Questions for the Council:

Q: BS asked if WH-T would be more prompt in replying to his emails?

A: WH-T admitted he received a great deal of email and had not always replied in a timely manner. He promised he would try to do better in the future.

Q: RG asked about the position on Street Friends as he understood these no longer came under direct LBB control?

A: JH was not aware of any specific change though it was possible these were now under supervision of the contractor concerned. JH went on to explain that a number of leaflets and brochures had been produced describing various volunteering activities and these would be available at the end off the meeting.

Q: TB asked about the de-classification of an area of Palace Gardens from Open Urban Space to facilitate new housing developments? He was particularly concerned that if the protection Open Urban Space provided for our Green Spaces could so easily be overturned, what did the future hold. This really needs to be challenged. TB also asked if the funds raised from the developments would be spent on our parks and green spaces.

A: WH-T replied that the re-classification was part of the Local Plan and the decisions had been taken at this level. He added that funds raised from any sell-offs would be invested and the income used to support all services within the borough. Indeed, statutory services would always taken precedent and there could be no guarantee that income would be spent on our parks.

10. Questions & Answers

Q: JR raised concern that a recent event allowed dogs to run through a dog-free area and how was this not policed properly?

A: AHO understood that this was a running event and that some competitors had brought along their pets. The dog free zone point had not been picked up at the time of application and to date no breach had been reported. AHO agreed they will tighten up on procedures in the future to try and avoid any repeat. He urged members to report any failings in the future so that lessons can be learnt.

11. Any Other Business

PWo wished to comment that Chislehurst Commons had been served very well by *idverde* and he did not necessarily agree with some of the misgivings expressed by other Groups. He was grateful to Forum for their hard work and was especially pleased that they had organised a members' meeting that invited a platform to both LBB and *idverde*. He hoped this could be repeated in 2020.

JJ asked members to consider making a pledge to planting more trees, especially in light of the borough's carbon neutral stance. The Woodland Trust can offer native trees and members can join the climate change fight-back by planting a tree in their garden or hosting an event.

12. Close

LH thanked members for their attendance and invited them to join Forum with drinks in the Mayoral Suite.

The next members' meeting will be held on 22nd January 2020 at the Civic Centre, Room 2, starting at 7pm.