

# FRIENDS FORUM OF BROMLEY PARKS & GREEN SPACES

## MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Civic Centre, Bromley, Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023, 6.30pm-8pm

### 1. Introduction and welcome of the Committee

Chairman, Larry Herbert, opened the meeting, thanked the Council for their assistance in 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

LH wished to record a vote of thanks to Kari Silvester, Forum Committee Member, who was standing down from her role at this AGM. KS has been part of the Forum Committee since November 2015 and as such has made a long-term contribution to proceedings. Unfortunately, due to ill-health KS is unable to be with us this evening.

#### Forum Committee:

Larry Herbert (LH)	Chair, Friends of Keston Common
Keith Rodwell (KR)	Vice-chair, Friends of Winsford Gardens
Barbara Arora (BA)	Chislehurst & Walden Rec
Vivien Smith (VS)	Friends of Scadbury Park
Richard Gibbons (RG)	Friends of Priory Gardens

#### Members:

Alan Brooks, Keston Common	Brian Willson, Warren Road
Chris Phillips (CP), Croydon Road Rec	Christine Humphrey, Tugmutton Common
David Allison, South Hill Wood & Kingswood Glen	David Moore (DM), Harvington
Gregor Campbell, Willett Rec	Jane Andrews (JA), Crofton & Sparrow Woods
Jeff Royce (JR), Bromley Town Parks	John Bruce (JB), Jubilee Country Park
Martin Stone (MS), Darrick & Newstead Woods	Michael Meekums, ODAS
Mike Titheridge, Tugmutton Common	Peter Runacres (PR), Jubilee Country Park
Peter White, South Hill Wood	Peter Woodward (PW), Chislehurst Commons
Pherenice Worsley-Buck (PWB), South Hill Wood	Ralph Ambrose (RA), Hoblingwell Wood
Tiziana Herbert, Keston Common	Trevor Pitman, Kelsey Park

#### idverde:

Mark Garthwaite (MG)	Andy Simpson (AS)	Sue Holland (SH)
Angela Wood (AW)	Penny Read	Anita Zambaldo
Jade Veronie	Emma Binley	Ellie Dennis

#### Bromley Council:

Cllr Will Rowlands (WR), Portfolio Holder  
Cllr Alison Stammers, Chislehurst & Walden Rec  
Hannah Jackson (HJ), Assistant Director  
Hugh Chapman (HC), Arboricultural Services Manager

## Apologies:

Brian Knights, Chislehurst Commons  
John Cutting, Kelsey Park  
Kari Silvester (KS), Bromley Town & Forum Officer  
Peter Hudson, Pratts Bottom  
Tony Allen (TA), Scadbury Park & Forum Treasurer

Brian Street, Darrick & Newstead Woods  
Judy John, Biodiversity Partnership  
Nick Hagon, Biggin Hill  
Sandy Goddard, Whitehall Rec  
Walter Leonard, Betts Park & Forum Officer

### 3. Minutes of the last AGM held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2022

The minutes of the last AGM were accepted with a couple of minor typing mistakes. There were no matters arising.

JR proposed and PW seconded.

### 4. Presentation of the Committee's Annual Report

LH referred to Forum's annual report and gave a brief overview of its content. In particular he highlighted the on-going actions with LBB/idverde. This included reference to park signage, drinking fountains, basic tool provision and training. LH commented that there had been a lot of staff changes over the past year and this had led to some difficulties. New appointments were now being made and it was hoped to overcome these difficulties in the coming months. LH also referred to its collaboration with other volunteering groups and external national bodies. LH concluded his presentation with a look at the year ahead and hoped for greater collaboration amongst Friends Groups.

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:** JA asked if there was deadline to the signage audit?

**A:** LH replied that there was no definitive deadline as such but hoped that most data would be received by the end of the year. At that point idverde could review the results to date and determine what further action might be required. AS confirmed this was what he was expecting and would help idverde determine how much effort they would require to fill the areas that had not been audited.

### 5. Presentation and Adoption of the Annual Accounts

In TA's absence LH presented the accounts which covered the financial year ending 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2023. LH explained that Forum had received grant monies of £9k this year which included £2k, which was outstanding from the 2021 accounts. LH went on to say that expenditure this year had exceeded the annual grant amount and that Forum planned to continue this level of spend to reduce some of the excess surplus.

In this financial year Forum offered Small Grants to the value of £286, which was rather disappointing in terms of total value. It was hoped many more Friends Groups would apply in the coming year and Forum would look again at the scheme to see if it could be made more attractive.

**Action: Forum**

LH reported that Forum had provided three first aid courses in the calendar year and in the light of increasing numbers it was expected that this number will need to increase to four per annum. This obviously has a cost impact.

LH went on to report that it had received full registration information from 42 Groups and that these had all received the support payment of £150 (includes 8 since 30<sup>th</sup> September). Forum would evaluate the situation for the coming year and determine whether another round of support payments will be possible.

**Action: Forum**

LH closed by thanking PR, the Examiner of the Accounts, for his speedy and efficient attention to the task and invited questions from the floor.

*Questions about the Accounts:*

**Q:** JR asked about the 5K spend on support Friends Groups?

**A:** LH explained that Forum had offered £150 to all active Groups on completion of their revised registration form. To 30<sup>th</sup> September 34 Groups had been paid (£5,100) with a further 8 (£1,200) subsequently. This left some 14 or so Groups who had not responded to the original offer. KR has sent reminders to these Groups and it may be that further payments will follow.

The Accounts were proposed by JA, seconded by JB and then formally adopted by a show of hands from members.

## **6. Approval of Independent Examiner**

PR (treasurer at Jubilee Country Park) presented himself to the meeting and confirmed he was willing to continue in the role of independent examiner.

Proposed by JB, seconded by JR. Approval and election for next year was agreed by a show of hands by all.

## **7. Election of Committee**

LH outlined the procedure for the election/re-election of the Forum committee members:

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

Barbara Arora, Chislehurst & Walden Rec

Ralph Ambrose, Hoblingwell Wood

Richard Gibbons, Priory Gardens

Vivien Smith, Scadbury Park

These were proposed by PWB and seconded by JR. A vote of approval by members was called with unanimous agreement for all nominees.

The nominee for the Treasurer role was as follows:

Tony Allen, Scadbury Park

TA was proposed by PW and seconded by MS. A vote of approval by members was called with unanimous agreement.

The nominee for the Vice-chair role was as follows:

Keith Rodwell, Winsford Gardens

KR was proposed by BA and seconded by JR. A vote of approval by members was called with unanimous agreement.

KR took the chair and presented the nominee for the Chair role as follows:

Larry Herbert, Keston Common

LH was proposed by KR and seconded by PW. A vote of approval by members was called with unanimous agreement.

## 8. *idverde* Report

MG opened *idverde*'s presentation with a brief introduction to himself explaining that he had taken on the role left by Andy Hodgson. He then introduced AW, who had prepared a five-minute video of *idverde*'s work over the past year. This was then presented to the meeting and will be made available to all via the You-Tube channel. A vote of thanks was shown to AW after the video broadcast.

*Questions for idverde:*

**Q:** JB asked about the Jubilee Parks Fund and *idverde*'s involvement? JB also referred to Forum's report indicating that around £500k had been approved for various projects and asked about the remainder of the fund?

**A:** HJ replied that the current approval of projects was now close to £600k and that a number had been completed. The Fund itself is available during the current administration to April 2026 or until the maximum amount has been reached, if sooner. Further applications are expected in April '24. HJ explained if Groups were having problems with their application, they should discuss this with the Council and/or *idverde* to ensure any issues were reported.

**Q:** PW referred to London wide Forum issues and how fortunate Bromley was in having a well-established Forum.

**A:** MG acknowledge that the set up at Bromley was superior to other boroughs he had worked at and praised the work of the Friends. LH thanked PW for his kind words.

**Q:** RG asked about *idverde*'s contract extension?

**A:** MG confirmed that *idverde* had every intention of extending their contract but as yet negotiations had not started or reached any conclusions. HJ agreed negotiations were at an early stage and would be looked at in the new year.

## 9. Bromley Council Report

HJ opened LBB's presentation with an introduction to WR, the newly elected portfolio holder. WR gave a brief description about himself, his past work at the Council and how he plans to operate in his new role.

HJ went on to present her PowerPoint slides, which are available as a separate attachment. Topics discussed included the Biodiversity Trials; Public Consultations; the Platinum Jubilee Parks Fund; Project Infrastructure; Water Bodies; Sports in Parks; Arboriculture and Crystal Palace Park.

*Questions for the Council:*

**Q:** JR asked about fences that had been removed as part of project work and when these would be reinstated?

**A:** HJ believed these would be re-instated but would need to get back to JR for a more definitive answer.

**Q:** PWB asked about the tree aftercare programme?

**A:** HJ confirmed that a programme for one year was in place for all trees planted with the Treemendous project. Beyond the first year the aftercare will be by and large on a needs basis and with resident support through the Tree Friends programme. WR added that the trees were guaranteed if they fail in the first year and would be replaced by the contractor.

**Q:** PR asked about Asian Hornets in Bromley?

**A:** SH replied that there was no knowledge of any sightings in Bromley. There is a government website that lists sightings and Friends should visit this if they have concerns.

**Q:** CP asked about commercial events in parks and how much money was coming back to the park as a result?

**A:** HJ confirmed that parks do benefit from the fees that are charged though accepted this might not go directly back to the Friends. LH added that there is a partnership action looking at this very subject and whether a levy can be applied that will benefit Friends Groups directly. WR confirmed the Council are looking at the matter in collaboration with idverde, who administer the process.

**Q:** DM asked about enforcement of litter and anti-social behaviour etc.?

**A:** HJ explained that the council was aware of the problem and issues it causes but the solution was not always that easy. LBB are looking at options with the police and ward security but it is never easy to fully enforce.

**Q:** RG asked about the upkeep of some 40 or so trees planted in Green St. Green, some of which were not part of the Tremendous project? Also, when will the Tree Toolkit be available?

**A:** HC confirmed that the Tree Toolkit was completed but had not yet been issued. With regard the upkeep of the older trees these would be done by exception following visits and surveys by the tree team.

**Q:** RG asked how Tree Friends can help to improve the untidy aspects?

**A:** HC replied that the easiest way was to report it.

**Q:** JR asked about the de-silting of ponds, including timeframe and funding?

**A:** HJ replied that this was being looked at. A new member of staff has been appointed to oversee the Kelsey Lakes project and it is expected that the role will be extended to oversee funding options for work on other water bodies. AS added that an audit of all water bodies would be needed to ascertain the extent of the issues.

**Q:** PWB asked about tree off-cuts left in South Hill Wood, which are too large to be easily dealt with or managed in a coherent way?

**A:** HC replied it was in hand and improvements would be made.

## **10. Questions & Answers**

No further questions were tabled.

## **11. Any Other Business**

None

## **12. Close**

LH thanked members for their attendance and wished them well.

It is expected that the next members' meeting will be early March 2024 (tbc). The next Forum AGM is planned for November 2024.