

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum

www.haringeyfriendsofparks.org.uk

Minutes of general meeting – 2 March 2013

Present: Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec) – *Chaired*; Dave Morris (Lordship Rec); David Warren (Parkland Walk); Jackie Goodwin (Finsbury Park); Bob Hare (New River); Gordon Hutchinson (Alexandra Palace); Ceri Williams (Chestnuts Park); Mal Hawley (Downhills Park); Michael Johns (Queen’s Wood) – *note-taker*. **Items 6-12** Simon Farrow (London Borough of Haringey); **Apologies:** Joyce Rosser (Priory Common); Catherine Appleby (Coldfall Woods); Rod Wells (Downhills Park); Fran Shepherd (Priory Park);

Resources The Forum now had a copy of the executive summary of the Council’s review. It appeared that someone at the Council had been pressing for outsourcing/privatisation of the service but this had been decided against. It was thought that opposition from Friends’ groups had been important in achieving this. Increases in park charges had been proposed which were generally less than 5% apart from allotments where a much higher increase had been proposed but rejected after opposition by allotment societies through the Haringey Allotments Forum. Discussions were continuing about reorganising parks maintenance staff to have specialist teams. Forum members understood the arguments for this but were concerned that losing the principle of having staff allocated to particular open spaces risked undermining the whole Parkforce idea for greater security and better service. **It was agreed that Dave should put the Forum’s report on its Friends Groups Questionnaire on the Friends Forum’s website.**

Open Day It had not been possible to organise the Open Day in time for the original planned date but the Council had now nominated Sarah Jones to work with the Forum. It was agreed that, rather than go for the next normal Forum date, as it was on a bank holiday, the Council should be sounded out about 8 or 15 June (in which case the July Forum would be cancelled). It was agreed it was important to give good publicity to Friends’ Groups as good attendance was very important to make the investment of time worthwhile. Groups would be asked to say in advance how many people would be coming in order to plan catering.

London and National Forums The next national Friends Groups conference would be held towards the end of April in NW England. There had been several national ‘crisis’ meetings on the lack of adequate resourcing of green spaces across the country and a petition would be launched in partnership with other bodies involved with the environment. This would be available on paper and electronically and would call for adequate resources and for a statutory duty to be placed on councils in relation to green spaces, to protect funding from becoming a poor relation at times of squeeze. The petition would be launched in Love Parks Week 27 July to 4 August. **The Forum agreed to encourage all Friends’ Groups to hold events in Love Parks Week and to have the petition available to be signed then.**

Walks and Guides A group from the Ramblers’ Association were going to walk along the Moselle path on 3 March. Haringey People were going to publicise the River Moselle and our own June 23

walk. It was understood that the material on the Haringey Trail (a previous map of a route around Haringey) was not suitable for reuse but the Forum would continue to look for ways to produce literature on walking routes in Haringey. A Haringey bike loop was being planned. **It was agreed that the planners should be encouraged to route this through Lordship Rec in order to pass through the model traffic area and near the café.** There were also concerns about the safety of the cycling access to Chestnuts Park.

Local Reports from the Friends, plus Council response

Chestnuts Park After many years of campaigning, money had been found for Phase 1 of the traffic improvements in Black Boy Lane by the park entrance. However, there was concern that work had not started and they were still waiting for a consultation document on Phase 2 to be published. Similarly work was promised to start on the new Cornwall Road entrance but nothing had happened and the Friends had not been told what was happening. It had also been agreed to replace the gates in Cornwall Road to allow for good cycle access. Another problem was cars getting into the park when gates were not locked. *Simon Farrow noted these issues.* The old pavilion was getting more derelict and anti-social behaviour behind it was increasing. The Friends were looking at the possibility of getting funding from one of the environmental trusts for demolition, although the Council were not hopeful. Erosion was being caused at path corners by council vehicles going across the grass as they turned. *Simon Farrow said this was an issue in many parks and the Council were looking at buying smaller and more manoeuvrable buggies and in the mean time had reminded the drivers of the need for care.* Posts had been put at many corners to discourage drivers, but these were not sufficiently anchored in the ground and children were removing them. There was new community management at the Chestnuts community centre who hoped they would get a renewed lease. The Friends thought that consent should be refused for any event in the park which required motor vehicles as the park was waterlogged and there had been major problems of enforcement at an event last year. *Simon said that the council's approach was to review usability the week before an event and cancel if the ground was too waterlogged. The organisers should pay for the council to have someone on site to control vehicular access: agreed that the events last year where the Friends' Group had had to try and enforce the rules were unacceptable.*

Queen's Wood The regular work groups continued. There had been a winter tree walk and would be two bird walks on 27 April. A survey was being conducted and a large number of species had already been spotted.

Downhills Park They also had a problem with vehicles damaging grass at path corners. There had also been two lorry loads of fly tipping which had diverted Parks Department resources into clearing up the mess. This had been caused by gates being left unlocked. There had been complaints about the new metal climbing frame in the playground as unsuitable for very young children, but it was thought that this was because it was in an area marked as suitable for children between 3 and 8 and it would be sensible to merge the two play areas as the equipment did not really follow the differentiation. The café was going well. Joan Curtis had stepped down from running the Art in the Park festival this year and a new team was taking over running it. The Friends wanted to record their immense gratitude for Joan for organising an event for 12 years which attracted many 100's of people every year.

Alexandra Park The Friends had proposed that two areas of the park – the Grove and around the boating lake - should be designated dogs on lead areas but this had not happened. They were trying to get the council to lay amending orders. 2013 would be the 150th anniversary of the Palace and the trust was organising a fete on 21 July. A new information centre run by the Friends had been opened with more space for people to meet, eg at the start and end of walks.

Parkland Walk Working parties continued with very variable numbers of volunteers. In the end the Parks Department had had to repair the entrance damaged by a contractor as the Enforcement team had not been able to secure restoration by the contractor. At Crouch End Hill there was a café belonging to Haringey Property Services. Sewage had leaked onto the walk and Parks Department had had to put a lot of pressure on Property Services to mend the leak. There was a high risk that the problem would recur. Graffiti remained an issue. Some was positively attractive; some was on tunnel type surfaces and was acceptable; but a lot was all over the place including on the attractive graffiti. There did not seem to be any practical way to stop it or remove it.

Lordship Rec The upgrade works were nearly complete. Some of the money would be used to deal with flooding problems in the model traffic area. The Friends were working with TCV to fix flooding across paths in the woods around the lake. They were consulting about installing distance markers around the park. There was also still some flooding in the enclosed sports pitch and the Council were trying to get £45k from Sport England to deal with this. They were trying to develop a new natural play area and were using crowd sourcing to get part of the funding. Another user group were working up proposals for an outdoor gym and table tennis table and would try to raise funds themselves. There would not be an annual festival for the whole park this year but a lot of individual events were planned, including one for the 75th anniversary of the model traffic area, a football tournament to celebrate acceptance of QE2 status for the playing fields and various events in the Shell theatre. The Friends had secured a temporary sublease for a room in the Eco-Hub for community activities but were still awaiting confirmation of this continuing as a long term arrangement as agreed previously. The lottery grant had been given on the strength of the community involvement in the project and it would be a mockery if there was no space which community groups could not have as their own. **The Forum agreed that it was important that Friends of Lordship Rec should have their sublease made permanent.**

New River The current New River Action Group had been set up a long time ago when there had been a threat to close much of the New River. It was now safe and the 400th anniversary of the opening of the New River would be celebrated on 29 September. The Action Group intended to enlarge its committee and change its focus to that of a Friends' Group. They were revamping their website and hoped to get a piece in Haringey People. There would be a big festival in Finsbury Park to celebrate the 400th anniversary and Thames Water would be holding events.

Priory Park They had been successful in getting QE2 status (which included recognition that the space should remain open and green in perpetuity). It was important to realise that it was still possible to apply for this status from Fields in Trust and that any green area on which games were played was eligible and not just full blown sports fields.

Albert Road The Friends had won a national award in the Getting Active category of sports fields from Fields in Trust.

Dog control orders Simon Farrow said that the dog control orders came into force on 1 April. For the first month, enforcement would largely consist of stopping and advising people who contravened the rules; from May fixed penalty notices would be issued. Enforcement would be conducted by the council's tactical enforcement team in conjunction with the police (also working with the Waltham Forest dog control team). Enforcement would be intelligence led and anyone who had concerns should notify the council of when and where the orders were being regularly breached and the teams would turn up. Simon would circulate an email with the detailed arrangements next week.

Small grant programme The council was about to circulate the arrangements for its small grant programme for events and activities in parks during the current year. There would be a total fund of £20k, with individual bids up to £1k. There would be no closing date for applications but organisations should get bids in quickly before funds ran out.

Love Parks week Simon Farrow confirmed that the Council would be supporting events for Love Parks Week and would provide publicity. Green Space, which coordinates Love Parks Week across the UK, had won lottery funding to increase the profile of the week. **It was agreed that a meeting of Forum representatives with the council would consider both the arrangements for the Open Meeting and Haringey Love Parks Week.**

Review of parks maintenance operations and budget As explained at the last meeting, the Council had decided to keep parks maintenance in house but to invest in new machinery and reorganise with a view to productivity increases of around 10-15%. The new machinery could not be procured until around the end of the year; in the mean time, they would be hiring in and testing better kit for the current season. The annual budget for supplying and maintaining equipment (which was organised on 5-7 year lease arrangements) would be increasing from £300k to £480k. The rest of the budget would remain unchanged. Overall, this should enable the standards in Green Flag parks to improve while that in other parks would stay about the same. They would be applying for Green Flag status for 16 green spaces. Work on improvement plans to Down Lane Park and Bruce Castle Park would continue. The Forum said that the council should consider improving White Hart Lane Recreation Ground and restoring or filling in the paddling pool, which was becoming dangerous. They recognised that the first step would be to try to encourage a Friends' Group and this was possibly a task for Groundwork or TCV, with the support of ourselves. The Forum said they would like to know what programmes TCV and Groundwork had agreed with the council. **Simon agreed to circulate these.**

Date of next meeting **Saturday 4th or 11th May 2013 (to be confirmed) at 10.00** at Bruce Castle. After that, if the open day was held in June, the next meeting of the Forum would be on 7 September 2013.