

Next General Meeting for all local Friends Groups – February 7th, 10am, Bruce Castle Museum

Minutes of general meeting –1 November 2014

Present: *Dave Morris (Friends of Lordship Rec.) - Chaired ; Martin Ball (Down Lane Park) ; Joyce Rosser (Priory Common); Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec), David Warren (Parkland Walk); Clif Osborne (TCV); Chris Setz (Haringey Tree Wardens); Catherine Appleby (Coldfall Woods); Michael Johns (Queen's Wood) – note-taker. **Items 6-9.** Andy Briggs (London Borough of Haringey); Frankie Hunt (London Borough of Haringey). **Apologies:** Ceri Williams (Chestnuts Pk); Gordon Hutchinson (Alexandra Pk); James Floyde (Russell Park); Jo Homan (Finsbury Pk Stakeholders)*

Matters Arising *Dave would check that the paper setting out the aims and principles of the Forum was on the website.*

London and national forums **a.** Cuts to budgets were a matter of controversy across the country. A national petition had been launched to press all political parties to commit to hold a national enquiry into the funding and management of the UK's green spaces, to bring in a statutory duty to monitor and manage these spaces to Green Flag Award standard and to ensure adequate public resources for all green spaces. It was agreed to press all Friends Groups to encourage their members to sign this. *Dave would circulate an email.* **b.** The campaign was growing in strength to designate London a national park to recognise the huge amount of green space there was in London and to raise its profile. Some Forum members pointed out that National Park status was defined in legislation and would not necessarily be appropriate for a large city and questioned the wisdom of campaigning for a goal which was inappropriate. It was agreed that special recognition of the scale of green space in London and the importance of preserving and enhancing it was absolutely right, while recognising that an alternative structure to National Park status, perhaps a new Green City concept, might be the way to go. **c.** A phone App had been developed to promote trails, and user groups could devise their own trails round parks and open spaces which people could follow using their mobile phones. *Dave to publicise to Forum.*

Haringey's Funding for Parks There was concern at the suggestion at the last meeting that the council might be aiming at a policy of covering all the costs of parks from income generated by them. [See later]. The Council were saying that a further £70m of cuts needed to be made across all Haringey's spending, but it was vital to protect the spending on maintenance of green spaces and to keep the income generated for additional projects. It was agreed that the Forum should make representations to the "Investing in our Tomorrows" consultation on spending which was being led by Cllr Jason Arthur and copy its views to all councillors. *Dave would look out the last letter the Forum had sent on the subject with a view to updating it.* Individual Friends' Groups should lobby their own ward councillors.

There was also concern that green spaces could be lost as part of the regeneration of Tottenham eg. proposals to build housing along Monument Way removing a stretch of open land; the Council were defending this claiming it was 'not public open space', which might be true technically, but in practice the public used it and regarded it in the same way as other green spaces. It was also vital that the Council used s106 funding and community levy to create and improve green spaces in areas facing redevelopment.

Yahoo email users group It was noted that not all Friends' Groups were using our fohpforum@yahoo.com email group to disseminate information around the borough. They should be encouraged to use it to communicate relevant information to interested parties. *Chris Setz would investigate the possibility of supplementing it with a Facebook page.*

New Walk Guide Joyce Rosser had a lot of pamphlets for the new Alexandra Palace to Bruce Castle walk. Friends' Groups were reminded that they could be sold at events for 50p with the proceeds going to their group. *Please contact Joyce.*

Local Reports from the Friends Groups, plus Council response

Queen's Wood Funding had now been received from the Lottery Fund for enhancement of the area near the Lodge. However, it was not clear what was happening about the match funding needed and there was a risk that the lottery funds would have to be returned if Groundwork did not find the match funding. *Andy Briggs agreed to investigate the position.*

Parkland Walk A more coherent approach was now being taken to encroachment and the first pieces of land were being taken back. *Andy said that they were commissioning a survey of the whole area which could be used in litigation if necessary.* There had been a meeting of the two Councils involved with Parkland Walk on the approach to be taken to

removing graffiti; the councils needed to agree the next steps. *Andy said Haringey's approach was to flood graffiti hot spots with removal activity to drive the graffiti artists away and they hoped to convince Islington to take the same approach.* Islington Council had originally helped set up a Forum of Friends' Groups, which had waned; the Groups had now reconstituted it and were running it themselves

Coldfall Woods There had been some problems with lighting. *Andy agreed to investigate.* In the coppiced area, brambles had grown up very strongly and there were complaints that this was encouraging rats. *Andy agreed to find out whether Pest Control had a locus to deal with problems in open spaces.*

Down Lane Park The revamped tennis courts were very popular. The park had been awarded Green Flag status and there had been a ceremony to raise the flag. The council had supplied bulbs and these would be planted by volunteers from Business in the Community. Security had been increased around the park since the incursion of travellers. *Andy said the Council would be reviewing the gates to make them more secure.* The Friends were concerned at the proposal for a 'Green Link' through the park which would involve a loss of land from the park, would go through the natural play area and the mound and would create new entrances and potentially split off the bottom area of the park. The map showing the area designated as protected under the Fields in Trust scheme had mistakenly left out this area. It was pointed out that designations should cover the whole of parks included and not just playing field areas, and that Lordship Rec had been able to get a map rectified for errors in drawing the boundaries, so Down Lane Park should investigate this. *Andy agreed to investigate.* There was also a risk that Tottenham regeneration plans might nibble at the boundaries of the park. The Friends were pleased that the planned Harris Academy were no longer seeking to annexe the Multi-Use Games Area in the park - they were now getting their own area.

Priory Common The Friends were grateful to the Council for mowing between the trees in the orchard area. They would be planting bulbs in the other area and also in the Rectory Lane open space.

Lordship Rec After a long dispute with the contractor overseeing the recent regeneration works the council had decided to finish off the remaining 'snagging' themselves. The Users Forum and Council have agreed an additional range of improvements which would need further fundraising efforts, including an Outdoor Gym. There were 9 separate users' groups leading lots of activities. These included a new Tottenham Clouds group which were organising a walk on 30 November around places associated with Luke Howard. 1,000 to 1,500 people had attended the Lordship Fest on 20 September. The Lease was about to be signed for the Hub, which had been open daily under community management since the beginning of July. There were now 1,200 members of the Friends, and they had mounted an exhibition at the Hub celebrating '25 years of community action in Lordship Rec'. The Friends would need to rethink their role now the intensive development phase was complete.

Tree Wardens November was the best time for planting trees and it was good to join in a coordinated approach. Local councillors could be keen to get associated with planting exercises. The tree wardens were planning one hour tree walks in parks and they would hope to work with Friends' Groups. Some dog owners deliberately train their dogs in attack skills by getting them to strip the bark off trees. It could be dangerous to intervene directly – the council should be notified as they were aware of the problem. Council workers were asked to be careful not to go too close to trees with trimmers as they could inadvertently kill the trees off.

TCV TCV were getting their volunteers to monitor growing plants in the areas they were working on to get a picture of the increase in biodiversity. This would be fed into the Conservation Action Plans which were being updated. They had run a number of training courses although the uptake had not been very good. They had developed a new course on urban conservation and biodiversity. The numbers of volunteers fluctuated but overall were holding up. They had managed to get enough volunteers to open up Railway Fields at weekends, and were hoping to continue during the winter. They were looking to employ someone to work directly with Friends' Groups – to be discussed in greater detail at the next Forum meeting. Monthly news bulletins continue.

Park Service Structure The reorganisation was almost complete. *Andy Briggs would let the Forum have a diagram of the new structure before the next meeting.* It was suggested it would be helpful to include pictures of the main individuals and a few lines about each of them. People generally were very supportive of Council staff once they knew them individually and their skills. Andy would be Head of all direct services; the parks and leisure service would be one of six he oversaw, and Simon Farrow would manage this service. Under him would be the two grounds maintenance teams, with Frankie Hunt leading the east of the borough and Lew Taylor the west. Trees and nature conservation would be brought together under Alex Fraser. Ian Holt would be part of this team. Infrastructure improvements would come under Tim Pyle, and Partnerships (including relations with Friends' Groups and TCV) under Sarah Jones. To date three people had left (Paul Ely, Ronnie Roach and a technician) out of a total headcount of around 75. It was expected that this size would be sustainable in both the current and next year's likely budgets. If Friends had issues relating to infrastructure maintenance

needed they should go to their maintenance team and it would be up to them to decide whether to involve the infrastructure team. Because the maintenance budget was very tight, it was likely that the dividing line between maintenance and improvements would be drawn at a low level.

Budget The medium term financial strategy would be going to the December cabinet meeting so proposals were likely to become public later in November. The Budget would be decided in February. Due to Government underfunding, £70m had to be cut from council budgets over three years. Senior officers were discussing options with cabinet members, but these would not be public.

The Forum reiterated their view that the last round of cuts of 50% in 2010/11 had not been justified, was disastrous, and ought to be reversed. Deterioration from underspending only happened gradually but there was a risk that green spaces would return to the state they had been in during the 1980s and 90s. Andy Briggs said that while there had been severe problems immediately after the last cuts, since then productivity and performance had improved and maintenance was now being done adequately. There would be pressure on budgets and there might in particular be controversial income generation requirements. They benchmarked against other London boroughs and believed they were in mid table for performance. The Forum thought this was very creditable considering that even before the cuts Haringey had been in the lowest quintile for resources allocated to the parks service. There was no published assessment of standards apart from the CIPFA indicators which were very broad.

Income generation The Forum were concerned that only very small amounts seemed to come to parks out of s106 planning agreements and community levy. As open spaces supported statutory duties like combating flooding, promoting health, supporting schools etc, these budgets ought to contribute to parks. Andy said that his team were actively fighting to secure more funding from these sources. The Forum thought it was important that support from other budgets was done by transfers to parks, rather than by hiving off activities and assets to other services which would have different priorities from parks. *Dave would circulate the answer to his Freedom of Information request on s106 funds.*

Tottenham regeneration The Forum expressed their concern that small areas of open land were being regarded as not being open public land and therefore as potentially available for development. The Forum asked what contact Parks department had with the regeneration plans and how far they were able to monitor that green spaces were being preserved and improved. Andy said that Ian Holt and Alex Fraser were the main points of contact for watching the implications of planning on green spaces. It was noted that the Friends of the Earth had secured over 2000 signatures on a petition to preserve the green space off Plevna Crescent in South Tottenham. The council had rejected the planning application but it was going to appeal. We agreed to back the campaign.

Groundwork The Forum had been promised a copy of the Council's evaluation of the cost and achievements under the Groundwork contract but we still had not received this. *Andy to investigate.*

Any other business a. The Forum thanked Joyce for running a joint Friends of Parks/Residents Associations stall at the Green Fair. b. Bridget Badoe would be circulating groups for expressions of interest in a two day course in event management by voluntary organisations. c. *Dave would approach Sarah Jones to book the room for next year's meetings.*