

HARINGEY FRIENDS OF PARKS FORUM MEETING - 5 NOVEMBER 2016

Parks / Green Spaces represented: **Alexandra Park** (Gordon Hutchinson, Robyn Thomas); **Chestnuts Park** (Ceri Williams); **Down Lane Park** (Martin Ball); **Downhills Park** (Clare Parry, Rod Wells); **Hornsey Church Tower** (Pamela Harling); **Meadow Orchard Project** (Pamela Harling); **Lordship Rec** (Joan Curtis, Dave Morris); **Manchester Gardens** - Vartry Community Residents' Association (Deborah Cawkwell); **Paignton Park** - Vartry Community Residents' Association (Deborah Cawkwell); **Markfield Park** (Deborah Cawkwell); **Nightingale Gardens** - Three Avenues Residents' Association (Susan Beckett); **Parkland Walk** (David Warren); **Queen's Wood** (David Warren); **Stationers Park**: (Phil Chinn); **Tottenham Cemetery** (Dave Morris); **Bruce Castle Park** (Dave Morris); **Wolves Lane** (Mandy Hawtry, Phil Chinn). **Plus: Growing in Haringey** (Pamela Harling); **Keston Action Group** (Rod Wells); **START Environment Group** - St Ann's Redevelopment Trust (Liz Gray); **TCV** (Cliff Osborne). **Council (from 11am):** Simon Farrow (Parks & Leisure Services Manager), Cllr Peray Ahmet (Cabinet Member for Environment) **Apologies:** Joyce Rosser (Priory Common).

MINUTES

- 1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING** Agreed.
- 2. SAVING OUR PARKS SERVICES - SCRUTINY:**
 - a. HARINGEY** Haringey Scrutiny Panel conference had agreed the proper funding of the parks service would be scheduled in for a scrutiny session in forthcoming year, but we're unclear if it has been. In Scrutiny conference report, "Council talking about £0 budget".
 - b. NATIONAL INQUIRY** Ceri submitted a Forum response. Rejected as a collection of 'old' docs (!). Resubmitted as a 'Case Study' with a NEW cover note. Accepted! We stated that we supported National Federation's calls for statutory service and adequate funding from taxation. [Unfortunately the Council's submission fudged that key point]. Dave invited to give evidence in parliament for the NFPGS - great hearing. He also mentioned the Haringey Forum. Evidence given re the 317,000-strong petition calling for parks to be a statutory service.
- 3. HARINGEY WALKING WEEKEND OCT 1/2** Very successful despite much rain. 20 walks - over 300 people. Great photo images provided. Good collaboration with Council via Smarter Travel. Intending to continue next year: Possible 2 walking weekends. Anyone who wants to feed in or get involved with engaging with public health - contact Joan. Showcase walks booklet - thousands available - contact Joan - groups can sell to fundraise for their groups, £1 rec price/donation.
- 4. DEVELOPMENT THREATS** There was growing concern regarding development threats to Haringey's green spaces - eg specific sites (including Downhills Park and Tottenham Hale), CrossRail 2, the need to expand green space to accommodate the fast-increasing population (including accessing Developer ££), the effect (unclear) of the recent change of 'Significant Local Open Land' designation, and creeping commercialisation (esp Finsbury Park).
- 5. LOCAL REPORTS**

Alexandra Park: Friends doing their usual range of events and activities. Trust applying for Premises License, includes more ability to control events in the park. Currently 8 days pa, proposal for increase to 43 pa. Friends opposed this - unanimous agreement by Trust that this would be too much, with Finsbury Park an example not to be followed. So commercial gigs ruled out.

Bruce Castle Park: New group. Going well. Doing monthly litter-picking. Drafting a formal constitution. **Chestnuts Park:** Hardly any Parks gardening at all - causing concern from Friends as the 'stewards for the future'. The lack of maintenance will become more noticeable in 3-4 years time. Friends/volunteers just keeping on top of Community Wildlife Garden area. Got grant to make this area. The newly-done round bed in front of Community Centre is poorly managed. Main field flooding: big Stonebridge Brook culvert may be leaking - Thames21 agree potential for project (some deculverting??) within next 10 years. 1000 hedging trees planted by Friends/TCV. Good collaboration with St Ann's Redevelopment Trust of future wildlife corridors. Glad that recent Travellers family caravans on site were able to move elsewhere quickly. **Downhills Park:** Proposed development on adjacent area at Keston Rd - concerns of Friends & residents - too high, too dense, and a historic part of the park threatened by a 'land swap' deal despite being Metropolitan Open Land. Historic boundary can be traced back to 1619. Felt to be spoiling a 100-year old park forever. Bad precedent. [Forum agreed to support the actions that the Keston Action Group and Friends of Downhills Park are taking to protect and preserve the park. Metropolitan Open Land regulations and planning regulations which are in place to protect parks must be adhered to.] Council using Downhills to test a new low-maintenance strategy for landscaping - many complaints: shrubbery, area around playground & by Keston Road - not properly engaging with the Friends. Note sent to Sarah Jones re bio-diversity, and state of paths. Following efforts by the Friends and café users, new café management in place and seems a success with lots of half-term activities and Friends' noticeboard - new tender in 6-10 weeks & Friends want to see the Friends/Council current partnership commitment honoured & transferred forward. [Council reps present confirmed this]. Friends doing bulb-planting, litter picking. Some travellers caravans recently came and went. **Down Lane Park:** A very active park and Friends Group generally working well with the Parks Service. Work in 'Richard Hope' space. 3 newly refurbished tennis courts - ongoing maintenance essential. Promised a range of improved facilities 10 years ago - most but not all delivered. Bowling green and

clubhouse issue – Council inviting bids to run the facility, but without proper consultation with Friends first. Issue with large waste bin, which gets put out onto pavement & attracts more waste. **Hornsey Church Tower:** Litter bin and litter collection issue - Veolia responsible? **Lordship Rec:** Was a neglected and abandoned space 15 years ago with anti-social behaviour. Now very active park with new outdoor gym used at all hours. “Exemplary” community-run Hub building with cafe has attracted even more people to park - usage has trebled since 2011 to nearly 1m a year) & community / user groups run very many activities & events all year. Monthly co-management meetings with council take up a huge range of ongoing issues together. Maintenance still huge issue despite dedicated maintenance budget (agreed with HLF), staffing and depot on site. **Manchester Gardens:** Very little Parks maintenance. Looks neglected. Litter problem (Veolia responsible?). Hope free bulbs will help get residents involved. **Markfield Park:** HLF-funded Beam Engine group have worries re proposed Crossrail2 development & delicate calibration of Engine, as well as ongoing access via Markfield Road. Great parks gardener; borders well tended. Ongoing issues with Community Garden & beds by Markfield Project. Ongoing issue with polluted Moselle (joins the River Lea here) & spray cans. Used heavily by local schools. Bulb planting by volunteers. **Paignton Park:** Very little Parks maintenance. Looks neglected. Weedy beds. Poorly maintained paths. Litter & dumping problem (who should deal with?). Ongoing drainage/sewage hole issue. Hope free bulbs will help get residents involved. **Meadow Orchard:** NHS land. Run by volunteers. Difficult to get enough volunteers for Saturdays. Generally looking good. **Nightingale Gardens (TARA Residents’ Association):** Neglected. Dangerous path. No lighting. Litter bins removed. Used to be 15 benches, but until recently just 1 – thanks to TARA lobbying benches have increased to 7. Parks Dept communication problems – hope now sorted. Avenue Gardens (which joins Nightingale Gardens) is also in poor state – Friends there now defunct. Really need to address the needs of the whole green space, which includes the New River. TARA will consider. Forum agreed to back any new Friends’ initiative. **Paddock:** Neglected nature reserve, and suffers from rubbish-dumping. Proposed re-launch of Friends group generating lots of interest. Biggest concern: maintenance & management. Want to work closely with Council. 21-storey Hale Wharf Development rejected following large residents’ campaign – it could have dominated the site despite £500,000 capital donation earmarked if went ahead. Essential green space for increased population due to new buildings throughout the area. **Parkland Walk:** Encroachment serious problem for years - working with council to address (slow but mostly successful). Francis Place development no longer a threat. Lot of money allocated for repair of bridges & viaducts. Big issue: maintenance & capital funding needed, especially for ecology and entrances. Friends’ membership subscription to start. Great bat walk & Walking Weekend brought a lot of new people. **Queen’s Wood:** Great bat walk. Historic boundary bank crumbling - explaining with an interpretation board. Biggest problem: many paths becoming unsafe & if not improved soon, may threaten green flag status. Also drainage problems. Work with TCV to make a couple of new small bridges. **Railway Fields:** TCV hub. Got grant for improving access, building path & steps. Plan to open at weekends solely via volunteers. Many Friends’ activities. **St Ann’s:** Redevelopment of St Ann’s hospital (2 thirds of site to be sold). Proposal by ‘StART’ community trust to lease the site to be community-led & managed with a focus on affordable homes, health & environment: integrated vision. Including sensory gardens, more green space (adjacent to Chesnuts Park), strip of woodland to become wildlife corridor, protect rare & exotic breeds planted 100 years ago - known academic research site. Great input from Alex Fraser & Ian Holt. Joint Walking Weekend walk with Chestnuts. Just had 2nd public consultation. StART have raised £30k in crowdfunding for developing community vision for site. **Stationers Park:** Historic water feature broken long time - requires major repair. **Tottenham Cemetery:** Dignity, the private management agency, have barely engaged with Friends for past year (demoralising for new Friends group) re paths, maintenance, etc. Walkabout due, with chance to address outstanding issues. **Wolves Lane:** In 2015 the full time staff were unfortunately moved out. Friends Group formed to lobby for / rescue the place. Have been running café as volunteers. Work with Action for Kids, veg growing/cooking/taking home. Would like to continue work in new development, plus with schools etc. Close co-operation essential. Have put in bid/tender for lease. Help from architects, strategic consultant. Palm House roof issue: fig & palms breaking through – needs to be made safe, protected & further damage to be prevented. Note that Wolves Lane mentioned in the 1619 ‘Dorset Report’ as ‘Roses Field’. Decision re future at Jan meeting of cabinet. Forum agreed to back the Friends’ bid – members happy to offer advice.

6. **COUNCIL RESPONSE (SIMON FARROW)** Replacements due for Ian Holt (conservation) & Martin Hall (park projects). Maintenance funding secured - hard infrastructure: 10-year annual pool of £300K pa; plus separate pot of £225K for 10 years (could be used as match funding) for sport; plus £1.2m over next 4 years for essential Parkland walk bridge-work. He will respond in writing to the specific local issues raised, which will then be attached to these Minutes.

7. **COUNCIL RESPONSE (Cllr Ahmet)** She welcomed the opportunity to attend the Forum and work in partnership with Friends Groups. She is committed to being a champion for Haringey’s parks and green spaces. She said that government cuts had put the Council in a very challenging position, especially for non-statutory services. On behalf of the Forum Ceri explained that there was a growing demand across the UK for statutory recognition for parks which the Council should fully support – as well as the need for adequate budget and staffing. As there was insufficient time for a full discussion about how best to protect our Parks Service and our parks generally, it was agreed to hold a special joint meeting for Council reps (including Cllr Ahmet) and Forum reps one evening in early December at the Museum. SF to get back to DM with a proposed date.

8. **DEVELOPMENT THREATS** Earlier in the meeting we had discussed number of issues regarding development threats (see pt 5 above) – these were summarised, to be addressed at the special meeting with Cllr Ahmet in December.

9. **NEXT MEETING** Possible topics for next meeting – biodiversity action plan / drainage. Dave to contact Sarah Jones to book dates for 2017.