

HARINGEY FRIENDS OF PARKS FORUM MEETING - 4 FEBRUARY 2017

Parks/Green spaces Friends Groups represented: Albert Road Rec (Katy Ferguson); Alexandra Park (Robyn Thomas); Bruce Castle Park (Georgina Fletcher, Klaus Kuerner); Down Lane Park (Martin Ball); Downhills Park (Clare Parry); Hornsey Church Tower (Pamela Harling); Meadow Orchard Project (Pamela Harling); Living Under One Sun / Stamford Road Park (Mark Adams, Leyla Laksari), Lordship Rec (Joan Curtis, Dave Morris); Parkland Walk (David Warren); Priory Common (Joyce Rosser); Queen's Wood (David Warren); Railway Fields (Mary Hogan); START Open Spaces – St Ann's Development Trust (Liz Gray); Tottenham Cemetery (Anna Murnane); Tottenham Green (Laura Harrison); Wolves Lane (Phil Chinn). Plus The Conservation Volunteers (Clif Osborne). Haringey Council (from 11am); James Hunt (projects); Lew Taylor (operations) **Apologies:** Chestnuts Park (Ceri Williams); Markfield Park (Deborah Cawkwell); White Hart Lane (Ann Scott); The Paddock (Quentin Given); Simon Farrow (Head of Service)

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Local Reports amended: St Ann's: proposal is to buy not lease the site; Wolves Lane: full-time café staff were moved out. Otherwise agreed. Simon Farrow had apologised for not getting back to the individual Friends' groups as promised at the last meeting.

2. FUNDING AND PROTECTING OUR PARKS SERVICE:

The agreed Forum/Cabinet Member meeting to be co-ordinated by Simon Farrow has not happened. Simon Farrow says he'll contact Cllr Peray Ahmet and hoped to get back to us the next week. It was clarified that the meeting is to focus on the future of the Parks service generally and getting more money into it (not just on regeneration issues).

3. PARKS INQUIRIES:

National: We await the report recommendations from the DCLG Select Committee, to which we contributed our views. The Inquiry is looking at solutions to the current crisis facing the UK's parks due to Govt cuts, as well as alternative management models. We noted that a good model is co-management between Council and Community, as established in Lordship Rec (who wrote to the Inquiry). *[Update from DM – now published. Recognises vital role of parks, and that there's an underfunding crisis. Calls for strategies and action by Councils but fails to support our call for the only thing that would offer real, long term protection – parks becoming a statutory service backed by adequate Government funding to local authorities.]*

London: This new Inquiry by the London Assembly replicates the one at a national level. Our Forum's submission was sent in. Awaiting report.

Haringey?: There was supposed to be a Haringey Scrutiny into our parks service, as proposed by us and agreed by the annual Scrutiny planning event. Simon Farrow and Cllr Ahmet were due to chase that up after the last meeting. No news yet. **Council response:** *James Hunt later said the Council is looking into what's happening in other local authorities' parks' services and there are no plans for the outsourcing of Haringey's parks service. The Forum re-iterated our support for our hardworking and dedicated park staff. Meanwhile the 'reorganisation' in the service continues and the Forum will get a revised chart of who's who when its completed. Also James will provide details of the 'substantial' 10 year capital funding secured for the parks service.*

4. DEVELOPMENT ISSUES:

Could be threats to public assets (including some green spaces and buildings?) from newly-planned highly-controversial 'Haringey Development Vehicle', proposed mechanism to shift £2billion of public land and assets (including housing estates) into private management. Council reps present later on in the meeting were not aware of any park-related land or facilities planned to be part of the HDV. **Action:** *Phil Chinn to check. James Hunt to inform us if any park-related issues.*

5. BIODIVERSITY:

Biodiversity Action Plans are a statutory obligation. Clif of TCV said that the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has just gone out of date and that after a replacement Conservation Officer is appointed for Ian Holt, it would be updated. Biodiversity is a key criteria for a site to get a Green Flag award. TCV has worked with Friends Groups to produce individual site Conservation Action Plans including biodiversity for about 20 Green Flag sites in Haringey. Queen's Wood, Parkland Walk and Lordship Rec already have robust plans in place. Implementation of these plans is up to a collaboration between the Council, Friends groups and TCV. The plans are on Haringey's website and everyone should look at what's in them. **Council response:** *The Conservation Officer recruitment is secondary to the Parks Manager recruitment and Council is still recruiting for a Parks Manager. Once this post is recruited, there is a commitment to appoint a Conservation Officer to replace Ian Holt.*

6. DRAINAGE:

Problems around drainage regularly affect green spaces via issues of underground streams, flooding and leaking pipes eg Chestnuts Pk, Queens Wd and White Hart Lane Rec. Joseph Barnett is enforcement officer for water quality. Borough-wide forum on underground streams is mooted, which we should be represented on. The third RiverFest at Lordship Rec is on 28 May. A session on drainage and flooding was suggested for our next meeting. Council officer on this – Adam Littler.

7. LOCAL REPORTS

Friends of Wolves Lane: The Wolves Lane centre runs children's activities and work with people with disabilities and concern was expressed about the continuity of these services in the transitional period to new management. Also there is the threat of neglect and vandalism if the centre is closed for any period. The Friends had bid for the lease, backed by the Forum. It was unclear why their very strong bid had not been accepted. The Council's preferred bidder, Organic Lea, is supposed to be talking with the Friends of Wolves Lanes about continuity going forward from the end of March, and opportunities for working together generally. Phil Chinn has written to Claire Kober and Simon Farrow to stress the need for continuity. Teachers and a community co-ordinator are employed there, and the palm houses need constant attention. The Forum re-iterated our full support for the Friends and requested the Council nudge this forward. *Council Response:* Lew said that park staff are being moved out to the nursery at Finsbury Park. We pointed out that this was crazy if this happened before the new management was in place. James said that Organic Lea want to and are expected to discuss things with the Friends.

Friends of Downhills Park: Successful bulb planting & litter picking in November 2016; community planting days for 21 new trees to be arranged for Feb and March; Waiting to hear who has won tender for the park's community café; Mixed feelings over the Council's removal of shrubs as part of a landscaping 'pilot'. Group is vigilant on proposed controversial housing development at Keston Road & consultation on a proposed Crossrail ventilation shaft - both could have negative impact; the annual Friends' Art in the Park event will be 16 July.

St Ann's Redevelopment Trust: Two thirds of St Ann's hospital site is being sold and the Trust is bidding to buy this land; Trust has taken on a business manager & project manager. Raised £25k in a public appeal to commission designs for their Community Plan for the site. Continuing to make connections with TCV and the London Wildlife Trust so as to integrate the best possible open space strategy as part of the community plan.

Friends of Alexandra Park: The Friends' talks, walks and Christmas events all well attended. A very full public meeting was held about the proposed 14-30 events per year the palace intends to hold which will include the park. Awaiting the result of that. The palace has no overall vision on how the park will be used in events, effect on the park of events has not been assessed eg effects on neighbours of noise & effects on wildlife habitats.

Friends of Tottenham Green: 3 year old group. Doing regular gardening activities, Green Gym & had a recent clean-up day. Thames Water arrived unexpectedly to do works which should finish by end March. Would like to know in advance in future. The Friends have had a lot of success in improving and animating the western side of the green – are aiming to give the eastern side more attention.

Living Under One Sun: Run a collective allotment in Tottenham Hale. Have trained 15 new food-growers, are doing bee-keeping and mushroom growing. Have many referrals from GPs. It is seen as community allotment rather than project which has been a barrier to fundraising. Are supporting the launch of a Friends of Stamford Road Park: The neglected and unused park has been cleaned up, 81 people have expressed interest in getting involved including local businesses, designers and a bike project. A public launch meeting is being organised. Dave to attend to advise/inspire.

Friends of Bruce Castle Park: Constitution now in place. Trying to get young people integrated in the group via involving nearby schools. Have met police to improve security, daily patrols promised. Made connections with the local community pub and the café in the park. Concerns about east side fence. The Forum wondered what happened to the plans for a Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the museum and park? *Council response:* Lew will find out about ownership of fence and what can be done to address concerns.

Friends of Tottenham Cemetery: Many issues at this site including broken fence, taps, lack of benches. Graham Homes of Dignity met the Friends for a walkabout in November but very little has been fixed and response to contact is lacking. The Council is supervising the contract with Dignity. *Council response:* James will take back Friends' comments to Simon Farrow who liaises with Dignity.

Friends of Queen's Wood: There has been some flooding and Friends are trying to find out who owns which drains, Thames Water or the Council. Asked about when there would be a new Conservation Officer. Asked also about dogbins.

Friends of Parkland Walk: Group very active. Plans for tree-cutting as part of creating a new nature trail area (in order to let in light for meadow habitat) have been delayed to next winter as there were issues to resolve. Also much needed repairs to bridges are underway and some further trees have had to be cut. The controversial development at Francis Place cant use the Walk for access but may be allowed 1 skip pw to remove rubble..

Friends of Finsbury Park: There's been a clean-up day. Manor House café going into the 'Development Vehicle' is a concern. Court case continues about commercial use of the park. Strong active group, now liaising with Council much better.

Friends of Down Lane Park: They had a useful walkaround with Cllr Ahmet and two residents' associations. Litter and anti-social behaviour has mostly stopped. Well used for football and tennis. Bowling Club building is now OK. Discussion going on between developers, Council and the Friends about massive planned developments on the edge of the park.

Meadow Orchard Project: This land belongs to the NHS. Open on Saturdays, with a Welcome Spring event today. Botany survey planned for summer.

Friends of Lordship Rec: Year of events planned for 2017. £7k funding obtained from GLA for planting new and maintaining existing trees and for 'hands on' training days on tree planting & care during 7 sessions Feb/March. The Friends are finishing their improvements to the lake (another £7k grant) and the hub terrace roof is finished after £14k raised thru public appeal. Group now possesses a suite of policies for Friends which can be shared with other groups if needed to help with funding bids etc. Hub success is leading to vehicle access challenges. Site visit by DCLG govt parks policy officers, arranged by the Friends, was a great success in demonstrating the way parks can be properly run when backed by adequate capital and revenue funding and community/Council partnership. They were very impressed and it got some national coverage in Horticulture Week..

Friends of Railway Fields: Going well. Last Saturdays of the month engage people in conservation work, family wildlife arts for children etc. Other Saturdays open the Reserve 11am-2pm August to December. Volunteers also opening site 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month. Four events additionally planned for year, the first a Dawn Chorus Walk in April.

Friends of Chestnuts Park: Major waterlogging caused by gradual degeneration of culvert pipe under park slowly erupting out of the ground, including sewerage. Simon Farrow and Haringey CEO visited recently. Friends request Parks' response. Trust for London funded orchard & willow garden project completing this year, further workshops to come plus new benches. Parks service is having to rectify vehicular damage to large area of park near Cornwall Road entrance due to padlock on gate being changed without copies of new key given to the centre or café and vehicles having to use the St Ann's gate which is not for vehicles. Friends getting keys in the next few days. Lack of gardening attention to hedgerows and beds due to low staffing levels. Having a speaker from St Ann's START at the AGM, to discuss exciting ideas about linking up green spaces of St Ann's hospital site with Chestnuts Park.

White Hart lane Rec: Continuing concerns over lack of repairs and progress on improvements needed. Council response: *Kelly Lloyd investigating drainage issues. James will get back to us with an update.*

Westbury Avenue Open Space: This small area of roadside green was 80% concreted over some years back. There is now some talk of bringing back more greenery there. We asked for an update.

Paddock: The Friends Group for this neglected nature reserve has been successfully re-launched. Clean up taken place. Now thinking of plans for the future.

8. PARK FURNITURE - Bins, benches, signage etc:

James said that this has been reactive up to now and they are developing a furniture strategy, reviewing all parks furniture and planning ahead with a style guide. To be rolled out as needed.

9. GREAT BRITISH SPRING CLEAN, 3rd-5th March.

There is kit Friends can loan from Council and park staff can remove bags.

10. NEXT MEETING

Sat April 1st – we need to revisit drainage & flooding; Renewal of the Biodiversity Action Plan (we want to be consulted); Conservation Action Plans usage and implementation