

## **Haringey Friends of Parks Forum**

[www.haringeyfriendsofparks.org.uk](http://www.haringeyfriendsofparks.org.uk)

### **Minutes of general meeting – 1 September 2012**

**Present:** Dave Morris (Lordship Rec) – Chaired; Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec and Tower Gardeens); Joyce Rosser (Priory Common), Ulla Lefmann (Ducketts Common); Mal Hawley (Downhills Park); Catherine Appleby (Coldfall Woods); Ricardo Johnson (Lordship Rec); Helen Steel (Lordship Rec and Chestnuts Park); Martin Laheen (Bruce Castle, Lordship Rec and Ducketts Common); Michael Johns (Queen's Wood) – note-taker; Paul Ely (London Borough of Haringey). **Items 3-4** Cllr Nilgun Canver (London Borough of Haringey);

**Apologies:** David Warren (Parkland Walk); Gordon Hutchinson (Alexandra Park); Jackie Goodwin (Finsbury Park); Ceri Williams (Chestnuts Park); Ros Abrams (Crouch End Open Spaces).

**1. Minutes of last meeting** agreed.

#### **2. Matters Arising**

Love Parks Week Nationally there had been over 1200 events involving 1 million people; there had been 4 or 5 events in Haringey.

#### **3. Dog control orders**

The consultation period had ended, and according to Cllr Canver showed overwhelming support for the proposals apart from excluding dogs altogether from Russell Park. This had been removed from the proposals which would now be put to Cabinet on 18 September. The report on the consultation would be available publicly from about a week beforehand. There would be no additional resources for enforcement; some council officers would be accredited to take action and there would be new signs in parks.

#### **4. Resources**

The Forum reiterated its view that resources needed at least to be restored to pre-cuts levels, which had already been among the lowest in London. Following protests from Friends Groups an extra £200k had been found on a one-off basis during 2011/12 but this would be needed every year. They asked what the thinking was for the 2012/13 budget and what the process would be for decision. Cllr Canver said she was very concerned by the cuts situation and had been able to argue for and secure the previous one off increase. However, she said, the Council had to find a further £24m of savings in 2012/13 and all directorates had been asked for proposals to deliver savings. These would affect all front line services. Statutory services were protected and so all others (which included parks services) would be disproportionately cut. No-one wanted to do it and it would be a big challenge. She had seen substantial improvements in park services in recent years and was very pleased that, with the Council working with Friends Groups, 15 parks now met Green Flag standards. The further cuts would be a big challenge. They would be looking at all the borough's services to consider raising charges, cutting aspects of service, altering the standards and changing delivery models.

Officials would put proposals to her on 11 September. They would then go to a budget challenge

meeting with the whole Cabinet on 27 September. After that proposals for all services would go to the Labour Group, to Scrutiny Committee and be put out for consultation. The final budget would be agreed in February.

The Forum felt that there was a risk that Green Flags could be removed, and anyway most parks still had not reached the Green Flag minimum standard. It was understood some Councils were withdrawing from the Green Flag scheme and it was hoped that Haringey was not considering that. The Council needed to make good on Cllr Strickland's pledge in the emergency debate that no green space in Haringey would be unmaintained. Although parks were not a statutory service, they could not be closed so the service could not be given up. The resources for maintenance in parks not covered by the Homes for Haringey contract and the Lottery Heritage Fund pledges were so minimal that further cuts were impossible.

On charges, the Forum asked whether the Council was considering charges to enter parks; Cllr Canver said they were not.

The Forum asked whether the Council had conducted an impact assessment on the effect of the cuts so far. Cllr Canver said this would be part of the report on the proposed cuts for the future. She did not know whether this would be published. Paul Ely said that the report was likely to cover an assessment of what they were able to do with a given level of resources and from this the impact of the cuts could be seen. The Forum said it was very important that Friends Groups did not lower their expectations as a result of the cuts; the Council needed to be aware of failures to reach acceptable standards compared with past levels and with proper levels of maintenance and not assume that lower standards would be accepted as unavoidable.

The Forum thanked Cllr Canver for attending and asked that she consider very carefully the arguments for increasing rather than reducing resources. They stressed that the Parks service itself was very demoralised.

## **5. Recycling**

Concern was expressed that many parks did not have recycling facilities for waste and, even where they did, the contents of the separate containers appeared to be all put together and taken to the incinerator rather than kept segregated like non park waste. Paul Ely agreed to find out what parks had recycling facilities and to find out what happened to the waste both in normal park usage and at the time of events. Martin Laheen was appointed recycling champion for the Forum and it was asked that he should be able to attend a full cycle of waste collection to see what was done with the waste.

## **6. Local Reports from the Friends, plus Council response**

### *Priory Common*

The orchard had been very successfully transformed by weekly working parties of volunteers.

### *Chestnuts Park*

A meeting had been held about creating a crossing at the entrance in Black Boy Lane; consultation was starting on moving the bus stop. The hedge along Cornwall Road needed pruning and the beds were going downhill. Paul Ely agreed to report this back. There was concern about the new entrance from Cornwall Road where a wall needed to be taken down

under a s106 agreement with developers; Paul Ely agreed to chase the Planning Department. It was agreed that, while not everything in the master plan had been achieved, a lot of improvements had taken place. The basketball court was scheduled to be kept as a multi-sport area.

### *Queen's Wood*

A successful bat walk had been held. The Victorian gents toilets had now been completely converted into a store room for tools, making a very useful space for the Friends and preserving an attractive building matching the Lodge.

### *Lordship Rec.*

Unfortunately there had been delays and the work would not all be finished in time for the festival on 22 September. It was now hoped that work would be completed in October. Managing and implementing the Lottery bid had been an extremely exhausting process, but the outcome was well worth it, with the park much more attractive and user groups flourishing. User groups are to be full partners in the future management of the park and its facilities.

### *Ducketts Common*

The basketball courts were working well. The Green Gym had initially been incorrectly installed but the contractors had been forced to put it right and it was now very popular. There had been problems with an alleged flasher at the North side of the Common and it was hoped that the CCTV cameras would deter him. There had also been instances of necklaces being snatched, though this was mostly happening in other places besides parks. Branches had come off trees in the bad weather. There was concern about how often trees were being checked for safety. There was a suggestion that there should be warning notices for the public, though some people felt this was an inherent risk with any trees and the important thing was to have enough resources to check the health of trees. Paul Ely agreed to ask Alex Fraser what the position was on tree inspections. All in all, Ducketts Common had been much improved in recent years thanks to the Friends efforts.

### *Downhills Park*

The Art in the Park event had been very successful and attracted 800-1,000 visitors. The table tennis table had still not been installed; Paul Ely agreed to chase this up. While some flower beds had been better than last year when they had been abandoned, the Italian garden was currently overgrown. Sustrans were working with the Friends and others on an art project. The Friends had suggested it should be a sculpture celebrating the diversity of the people of Haringey.

### *Bruce Castle Park*

There were new tennis and basketball courts. Some apple trees were being kept in pots in a shady position where they would not flourish while waiting for a permanent home. Veolia still appeared to be bringing heavy lorries into the park. There was a pressing need for a greater focus on parks issues; the Friends Group concentrated on issues to do with the museum. It was suggested that residents interested in the park should try and get a subgroup of the Friends Group set up to deal with park issues. Paul Ely said that the Council wanted to look at the site as a future Lottery heritage project but it would be necessary at that stage to strengthen resident involvement. The lease for the bowling club had now been signed.

## *Coldfall Woods*

There were continuing concerns about people being frightened by someone in the wood; it had been suggested that some foliage should be cut back to reduce places to hide, but it was important to retain a balanced approach and to protect the woodland. Some contractors had damaged some earthworks in the wood; Ian Holt was working to ensure that they rectified the damage. The Friends were still working on a meeting in October to celebrate the achievements in the area.

## **7. Open Day**

The Forum agreed to go ahead with its proposed joint open day of the council and Friends Groups. It was agreed it should be held in Lordship Rec in February. The proposed timetable should be shortened to 4 hours followed by lunch and a tour of the park.

## **8. Management Plans and Green Flags**

The process of agreeing Management Plans had been very rushed last year in order to be ready for the Green Flag process. It now seems that the Council was allowed to make self-assessments on whether the GF parks reached the required standards. All did. The Council would be holding meetings with all Friends Groups for Green Flag parks to update these plans. (Parks affected: Finsbury Park, Belmont, Chestnuts, Markfield, Russell, Albert Road, Bruce Castle, Coldfall Woods, Downhills, Priory Park, Fairlane, Painters Park, Chapmans Park, Stationers Park, Railway Fields). The proposed inventory of buildings, including memorial benches and other memorials, would form part of this process. It was agreed that the form for the inventory should be circulated in draft to Friends Groups for comment. When finalised it also needed to be circulated to parks without Green Flags. Some non Green Flag parks, like Queen's Wood, had Management Plans – there was no need for formal meetings so long as the Council continued to keep in close contact with the Friends Groups.

## **9. Events**

It was asked why the 10-day Jamaica Village event in Finsbury Park had been cancelled. This had been at the behest of the organisers and only they could say why they had cancelled.

It was suggested that more needed to be done to keep young people involved in parks and that sports events could be a means of involving them. The Forum agreed that Ricardo Johnson ([Ricardo\\_sports@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:Ricardo_sports@yahoo.co.uk)) should be their champion for sports. It was agreed that he (and Martin Laheen as recycling champion) would write a description of what the role would involve for discussion at the next meeting. It was important that the Forum or individuals did not try to intervene or take on activities which were proper for the individual Friends Groups but someone who could help individual groups to develop recycling or sports activities could be very helpful. As always, it would be crucial that personal conflicts of interest were avoided.

## **10. Any other business**

### *Bull Lane playing fields*

The Forum reiterated its support to those trying to save and raise money to buy Bull Lane playing field from the Council. Despite the proposals being backed by a Lottery grant the

Council has yet to support them. The Forum's policy remained that all Haringey green spaces should be preserved and protected rather than being developed for housing or other uses.

*London and national forums*

Dave Morris continued to represent the Forum at these bodies. The next meeting of the London wide group was on 24 September.

**11. Date of next meeting**

**Saturday 3 November 2012 at 10.00** at Bruce Castle.