

HARINGEY FRIENDS OF PARKS FORUM MEETING – 1ST APRIL 2017

Present: Gordon Hutchinson (Alexandra Palace Park), Clive Carter (Finsbury Park), John Miles (Parkside Malven Residents Association) Klaus Michael Kuerner (Bruce Castle Park), Alison Johnston (Priory Park), Anne Scott (White Hart Lane Rec), Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec), Ann (Coldfall Wood and Muswell Hill Playing Fields), Helen Marsden (Railway Fields), Clif Osborne (TCV), Liz Gray (St Ann's Green Space), Katy Ferguson (Albert Rd Recreation Ground), Clare Parry (Downhills Park), Ceri Williams (Chestnuts Park), David Warren (Parkland Walk, and Queens Wood), Mandy Hawting (Wolves Lane), Phil Chinn (Wolves Lane), Anna Murnane (Tottenham Cemetery), Martin Ball (Down Lane) + after 11am, Lew Taylor (LBH). **Apologies:** Quentin Given (The Paddock), Joyce Rosser (Priory Common), Deborah (Markfield), Pamela (Meadow Orchard Project), Chris (Edible Landscapes).

Minutes of last meeting Agreed. Will now call START green spaces group 'St Ann's Hospital Green Space'.

1. Scrutiny Review Dave M and Joyce R attended a scrutiny conference last year where they successfully lobbied for a review of parks funding. This was later raised with Cabinet Member for Environment and Dave M wrote to the heads of scrutiny panels. We have now been asked what we want the panel to consider: 1. Adequate funding. 2. Commitment to in-house parks service. 3. Protection of all public green space. 4. Maintenance of standards including aiming for Green Flag standard in all Haringey public green spaces. 5. Identification of adequate staffing levels. 6. No inappropriate commercialization. 7. Recognition of wider benefits and contributions to other statutory outcomes – a multi-departmental approach eg health, education, highways/travel routes, flood control, climate change mitigation, biodiversity etc. 8. Reference to wider context/history etc. [See letter at end]

2. Planning Issues

'Haringey Development Vehicle' There is a growing campaign against the proposed HDV in which up to \$2bn of Council-run public assets are to put into a private management set-up. We wanted confirmation of what we'd been told - that no park land or assets would be included. Agreed to sign a letter to the Borough Auditor re desire to be consulted as part of that process.

Chestnuts: The Friends are opposing a threat out of the blue by the Council to demolish the Chestnuts Community Centre to create a large and inappropriate 'Youth Zone' to be run by a private charity. Concern that a large part of the park would be fenced off (at least 5,500 sq metres for a complete Youth Zone complex). While the Friends agree that young people desperately need good facilities all over the borough it should not be centralized at one spot, and should not be at the expense of a public green space. Funding for youth zones only lasts for 3 years and there is no guarantee that the project would survive after that and could become a major private facility in a public park. The Forum agreed to support the Friends of Chestnuts who were going to discuss the issue at a special public meeting on 2nd April.

Downhills: Concerned that the park service depot was sold off without any consultation with the Friends who store a lot of their equipment there. Also the controversial and much-opposed 'Pocket Living' development over-looking the park has been given the go-ahead. The Friends continue to oppose a threat of a large Crossrail ventilation shaft in the Park, but no news on this yet.

Wood Green / New River: Concern over possible filter beds housing redevelopment, despite being protected land.

Planning Dept consultation mapping: For more systematic consultation the Planning Dept is creating a map of all Residents Associations and Friends of Parks Groups. The Haringey Federation of Residents Associations has agreed to support/help. We agreed to back this.

3. London and National:

The **Friends Groups movement** continues to coordinate and speak out for the UK's public green space.

The **Communities and Local Government Select Committee** of MPs have now published their 'Public Parks' report – to which the Haringey Forum, the London Friends Groups Network and the National Federation all contributed our views. The Report recognised the crucial importance of green space and the serious underfunding crisis unfolding despite massive public concern. Called for action, at all levels including cross-departmental support for parks. Outlined the strong case (which had been put by the Friends Groups movement and 322,000 petitioners) for parks to be designated as a statutory service, but failed to endorse this hoping instead that the desired outcomes could be achieved by other means. This lets the Govt off the hook and ensures the crisis will continue to deepen.

A Report from the parallel **London Inquiry** is expected this summer.

4. Walks: Joan C is organising a Walking Fair, as a follow up to last year's successful Forum-backed Walking Weekend and book of Haringey Walks. It will be in the Hub at Lordship Rec on May 6th with walks, talks and stalls.

5. Sports Consultation: A few Friends Groups attended the Councils Sport and Physical Activity Consultation at the Civic Centre. Andrea Keeble from the Council outlined the Councils Sport Strategy and presented a document showing a list of where the Council planned to develop and upgrade sporting opportunities/facilities in the borough with partners. Some had potential partners and funding like development of cricket and football at Bull Lane but others needed to find funding partners. It was stated that if enough evidence could be found through consultation and other means for a particular sporting development then that could be given higher priority.

6. Local Friends of Parks Reports

Downhills: They had a good turnout to plant 22 new trees. Steps from midnight alley up to the pond are to be replaced. Council have refused planning permission for telecommunications mast. Awaiting news about the new café management. Planning issues – see above concerns. Council Response: Money from sale of depot will be allocated to parks. Will work with Friends to collect belongings. Moving staff base to Woodside or Down Lane but not decided yet.

Albert Rec: Also fought off plans for a telecommunications pole. Now offering Petanque to the wide range of sports there. A 12 yr old tennis star from Pavillion Tennis Club has become top national amateur. Have had lots of social and planting events. Pond Life installed a pond but the 10 yr maintenance agreement was not properly carried out and the pond not doing well. Funding is being sought after agreement to allow extension of the Pavillion building. Council Response: Council are committed to pond's success, not to fill it in. TCV to have a look at it.

St Ann's Green Space: The StART Trust is preparing a Community Masterplan for the long term future of the site which can be viewed on their website: startharingey.co.uk. It includes a list of environmental principles covering both green space and housing design/use on the site. StART's environment group have made contact with many groups for advice, eg. Living Under One Sun. A new group N15 Eco-Arts is working with the London Wildlife Trust and TCV regarding funding for the one third of the St Ann's Site to be retained by the Hospital – focusing on the woodland strip along the railway line which is a site of importance to nature conservation (SINC). A successful application has been made to Network Rail Biodiversity Offsetting Scheme.

Railway Fields: Holding conservation days on Saturdays. Have a 300+ mailing list and continue to run events. The fact that it is open more (9-5 mon-fri and 11-2 on the last Saturday of the month and alternate sundays) is much appreciated by local people. Developing a natural play area based around a "mud kitchen".

Coldfall Wood and Muswell Hill Playing Field: Small but active group with a large mailing list. Japanese knot weed coming in from the cemetery. Bridges across stream have been replaced but concerns about condition of some of them. Coppicing will resume, working with TCV. Lots of walks planned. Council Response: Japanese Knotweed – second treatment next week and ongoing treatment over a 3 year period.

Lordship Rec: Things going well, new outdoor gym incredibly popular and the community-run Hub is growing in popularity. The Friends' lake improvements are nearly complete with new planting and islands and interpretation board funded by Trust For London. 116 new trees have been planted by the Friends, some to replace dead ones that did not survive after the regeneration of the park. The maintenance programme for the Moselle River is still not properly in place and discussions are ongoing as the pollution going into the river via foul water misconnections across the borough continues. It is important, when new projects/work in parks are completed, to ensure there's an ongoing maintenance plan so that projects can succeed. Joseph Barnett who was employed by Homes for Haringey to enforce orders for households and businesses to correct misconnections and was doing a good job has now left his post and we have been reassured this work will continue – but what if resources are lacking?. There is also discussion ongoing re the maintenance of the dirt track that was also put in during the large regeneration of the park. Go wild, an environmental event will be on May 21st. Many other events, recent and planned. Govt parks officers visited the Rec and were very impressed – a planned Ministerial visit for national publicity unfortunately had to be cancelled at the last minute.

White Hart Lane Rec: Ongoing problem with drainage situation and flooding across paths and the general unsafe state of paths, despite lobbying for action. Friends want to use the old paddling pool area for an event called Past Time Paradise/Play Island on April 30th so need it cleaned out. Would like a site meeting with Lew Taylor. Kelly Lloyd is leading on drainage issues and survey work. The Forum thinks the Council should have plans for regenerating the neglected Rec.

Priory Park: Had a successful carol concert. Have had a concrete Table Tennis table installed. The restoration of the Fountain is ongoing and a steering group has been set up to apply to the HLF. Produced a hedgehog leaflet and the pond is going well. They did a litter pick on the perimeters and collected over 30 bags of rubbish. The Philosophers

Garden used to be totally dog free but new signs allow them in. Frequency of fun fairs has increased – Mannings now 15 days and park closed off to the public. Concerns that the park is being used for commercial gain. Council Response: Dialogue with council continuing. New Dog sign is a corporate sign general for all parks – will take concern back as a point to be raised.

Bruce Castle Park: Small new-ish group at present. Do monthly litter-picks. Planted 12 trees. State of a border fence needs addressing. Need better notice boards as the present ones have a lot of condensation. There is now football training from 10-1 on Sundays for a small fee. Council Response: Fence belongs to private property owners – will liaise with Friends.

Parkside/Malvern Res Assoc: Look after some local shrubbery and planters and cleaning. Tending trees at Hornsey Park Road and Clarendon. Discussing de-culverting of Moselle River. Meeting with developers re old gas works site re new open spaces to be developed but privately owned and not managed by Council.

Wolves Lane: The Centre has unfortunately been closed to the public from 30th April 2017 for an unspecified period. Organic Lea have been given a lease on behalf of Crop Drop and London Grown who will run the site. They had a meeting with Wolves Lane Friends (who had themselves put in a bid to run the site) on 13th March but the new lessees did not have any detailed transition plans in place. The Friends continue to raise important issues and concerns. A community petition collected 2500 signatures but this has so far been ignored. Friends met Cabinet Member and Simon F re timetable, but there seemed to be no willingness to agree a timeline. There was no mention of the closure on the Council Website or Organic Lea. There seemed to be no commitment on the part of Organic Lea to continue the great work with people with learning difficulties or with schools. It was not clear if the Friends could continue to meet at the centre at this point. However their lobbying has led to a member of staff being employed to look after the terrapins and fish etc. Friends have written down what they hope to do at the Centre – again no response as yet. The Forum agreed that there should be transparency, a good transition plan, and the Friends – who are committed to working constructively with the new management - should be able to continue on-site activities and be a partner in the management of the Centre. Council Response: Will take back concerns and opinions of Friends that the way that things have been dealt with is seen as unacceptable.

Finsbury Park: Legal challenge (Judicial Review) re inappropriate commercialisation – Friends have permission to appeal. Open Spaces Society has been given leave to speak in court and made a written submission. Now more concerts and funfairs have been permitted in the park. Concerns about the future of the Southern-most tip of the park that has been fenced off for years. There has been some concern over the future of Edible Landscapes since their buildings will all become Council nurseries (see below).

Edible Landscapes: Edible landscapes have been negotiating with the Council about their nursery and bee keeping space in Finsbury Park. The Council are going to look again at the proposed parks operations footprint with a view to apportioning the site so that Edible Landscapes and the beekeeping can remain in the park. They have been developing a community forest garden at the nursery, running accredited forest gardening training and delivering volunteer and educational programmes since 2010. The Ward Councillors have been very supportive and now Council are aware of Edible Landscape's "Asset of Community Value" status. Positive actions being taken forward now to improve the situation. Edible Landscape's showcase bed is going to be moved to a new site in the wider park.

Alexandra Park: Programme of Friends' activities has been extended. Lisa Worledge gave a very good bat talk. There has been an application for premises license to cover activities in the park with total number of days being 42 (plus set up time). Friends have objected to number of events on the basis of damage to biodiversity and the denial of access by park users to their regular areas of recreation. Some concerns re Wood Green Area Action Plan with the filter beds and reservoirs being added into the plan. 300 houses planned on Metropolitan Open Land.

Tottenham Cemetery: Thanks to the persistence of the Friends good dialogue has finally been developed with Dignity who run the site and have committed in writing to working with the Friends. They are now fixing fences and taps etc, have been round to check on state of paths, and to identify other problems. There is to be a memorial inspection programme to check its safety..

Queens Wood: New Friends' interpretation board installed. Trying to sort out with Thames Water re pipes for Moselle and other drainage problems so that the paths can be repaired. Walks and Talks continue. Both Queens Wood and Parkland Walk really value the help they get from TCV. Council Response: Council disappointed that the meeting with Thames Water was cancelled but will be rescheduled.

Parkland Walk: Friends are developing a nature trail and clearing vegetation. This work along with bridge repairs along the walk has exposed a lot of brickwork which has encouraged more graffiti. Although both Islington and Haringey have a 'No Graffiti' policy they seem unable to do anything about it. Islington Public Health Group are working with Haringey on organising health walks.

Woodside Park: What is happening with the unfinished children's play area? Also broken railings by the sensory garden. The Green Flag pole has no flag? Council Response: *Green Flag going up this week. Fencing being removed this week. Will speak to Tim Pyall for update on play area.*

Chestnuts: Long running Friends' improvement project coming to an end with installation of new benches. It has been very successful. TCV and Friends have planted 1000 whips around the perimeter. In relation to the proposal to develop a private Youth Zone in the park (see above) the Friends insist the Council should in future to be much more robust in their opposition to any loss of public green space. Council Response: *will take concerns back to Council*

Down Lane: Bowling green lease has gone out to tender, with bids by some good local community organisations which would ensure public access. Friends met with developers re interface between developments and the park and covered a range of issues. The MUGA is to be funded and built by the Council.

The Paddock: Things have continued to be busy at the Paddock since the new Friends Group started. There has been massive clear ups with more to do. Campers who were on the site seem to have gone but have left mounds of rubbish behind. Clearing some of the buddleia to open up the front of the site and creating more paths. Also have put up bird and bat boxes.

7. New Friends Groups:

- New group planned for **Chapmans Green** – On our behalf, Dave to attend launch meeting in May to advise/support. Update: *It went very well!*
- New **Friends of Stamford Road Park** now up and running, supported by LUOS - Dave also attended their launch.

8. AOB

- Forum reps are still expecting to have meeting with Councillor Ahmet and Simon F re parks funding etc.
- We still want to have the new Parks Service staffing structure document
- No time to discuss drainage & flooding and biodiversity – will carry forward
- Veolia are planning to begin charging for collection of household green waste and bulky items. This could impact on parks with extra dumping.
- Haringey Weekend of Play – some Friends Groups offered to hold small events to support the council's play event, as requested, but then were still expected to fill in all the major time consuming forms to book the park etc.

PARKS SCRUTINY REVIEW

Hi Rob - Apols for delay. The well-attended (18 local groups) Haringey Friends of Parks Forum meeting on April 1st discussed this matter at some length and aim to fully support the Scrutiny review and encourage engagement. As requested, we propose the following remit/themes:

1. We strongly agree that **'support and potential funding' for the Haringey Parks Service should be the key theme**, as mentioned in your email.
2. We also want to **add 'effective protection'** of our public green spaces and their facilities from inappropriate development or commercialisation.
3. We agree that the CLG Select Cttee Report of the National Inquiry into Parks should also be reviewed, especially for its usefulness to the above point 1.

Breaking down point 1 into sub-themes, we propose the following be reviewed:

- 1a. ideas and options for **ensuring adequate funding in the short, medium and long term** for our in-house Parks Service
- 1b. how to **maintain standards**, including aiming for green flag standard for all our managed public green spaces
- 1c. identifying the **appropriate/adequate staffing levels needed**.
- 1d. identifying how to access the **maximum s106 / CIL capital and maintenance funding**
- 1e. looking at how to ensure **HLF match funding commitments come from other LBH sources** than the Parks Service budget
- 1f. In the light of the National Report's recommendations on a multi-departmental approach (see point 3 above), identify the range of major benefits and contributions to statutory outcomes (eg health and well-being, waste collection, biodiversity, transport routes, climate change mitigation, flood control, crime reduction etc) achieved by Haringey's parks and green space, and **how to ensure that all departments/services recognise and contribute** to ensuring the success of the Parks Service.

We believe that this review needs to be a very substantial one in the light of the growing underfunding and understaffing crisis our green spaces are facing, and in the light of the London and National reviews taking place. It is also likely to lead to very extensive public interest and contributions, and if done properly could very well be a historic opportunity to demonstrate the importance of our public green spaces and of the public's love for them, and the importance of the scrutiny process.

sincerely: Joan Curtis and Dave Morris - for the Haringey Friends of Parks Forum