

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum – General Meeting 3rd Feb 2024

Present: Friends Groups reps - Dave Morris (**Lordship Rec**) - chaired, Deborah Cawkwell (**Manchester Gdns, and Paignton Pk**) – took minutes, Martin Ball (**Down Lane Pk Friends**), Pamela Harling (**Tottenham Cemetery and Wolves Lane**), Klaus Kuerner (**Bruce Castle Pk**), Axel (**Belmont Rec**), Dayal Strub (**Tower Gardens Pk**), Joan Curtis (**Lordship Rec**), Clare Parry (**Downhills Pk**), Cathy Meeus (**Parkland Walk**), Thunder Raven-Stoker (**Queen's Wood**), Roseline Lyanda-Mogaji (**Down Lane Pk Users Forum**), Vicci Midwinter (**Coldfall Woods & Muswell Hill Playing Fields**), Ceri Williams (**Chestnuts Pk**) and Cassandra Li (**TCV**), **From 11am: Council reps:** Emma Betts (LBH Parks Community Engagement), Sahina Choudhury (LBH Head of Parks Operations) **Apologies:** Alex (**Coldfall Woods & Muswell Hill Playing Fields**), Robyn Thomas (**Alexandra Park**), Chris Chadwick (**Priory Park**), Heskith Benoit (**Haringey Basketball Association, and Ducketts Common**), Joyce Rosser (**Priory Common, and Rectory Gardens**), Quentin Given (**The Paddock**), Teresa (**The Greens Bounds Green**), Dan Meagher (**Belmont Rec**)

Note: Dave distributed a pack of key documents to all delegates present. Many had been emailed to our internal list previously. A number of groups had circulated detailed local reports.

PART 1

- **Minutes** of last meeting in November agreed.
- **Key Forum Issues:**
 - **Council budget update** – Council planned budget underfunded by £16m so making cuts since December. Every dept affected. This is a UK-wide problem for all Councils, so hard for us to respond effectively just at the local level. Sahina's response below...
 - **Recycling & waste** – No recycling of waste in parks due to poor quality. Split bins being introduced across parks (4-year process). Educational campaign required. Pamela suggested working with Edmonton London Waste for better sorting. Clare suggested sharing what we know isn't working. We need to be a stakeholder in this process. **Agreed: Pamela to draft a letter to Ann Baker, Head of Recycling.**
 - **Playzones** – As discussed in detail at last meeting [see item 10 in the last minutes], funding is available for new MUGA facilities. Full written details had been circulated last November. Paul Ely (LBH consultant) has provided a new written update which we also circulated to all groups. 4 new MUGAs (Belmont, Downhills, Hartington, Bruce Castle). Keen to ensure use by woman & girls, as well as men & boys. Belmont Rec folks happy with being chosen for a new MUGA. **Agreed: Better installation communication required (Bruce Castle). Need to acknowledge different issues and needs for each location.**
 - **Campaigns to protect greenspace: Parkland Walk** - Council keen to improve accessibility where entrances or surface is a problem for wheelchair users. But PW is a nature reserve, rather than leisure park/cycle path. Fast cycling would damage the structure & tranquil essence. So this needs lots of thought and care. Cathy feels that the current public consultation may have been predetermined, especially with the involvement of SusTrans (cycling path consultants). Could any available budget be better used? **Agreed: We will continue to support the Friends Priory Park** - New tennis courts/lighting has gone in: One court has controlled access (for advanced booking), and the other is open access (which the Friends had called for). After a long process, the Council decided 2 days before the works were due to start that a much loved hedge separating the 2 courts needed to be removed completely rather than only an agreed section, in order to align the 2 courts entrances. However, they only agreed this with local Councillors, rather than the Friends. Despite the Council offering to plant an extra hedge and trees elsewhere, there was uproar and local people turned up to stop the works and protect the remaining section of the hedge.
 - **Zonal Team meeting** – Zonal Team officers are tasked with ensuring good Parks Service / Friends Groups communications. This has not been working effectively, so meeting has been planned for sometime to discuss this. However the team is chronically understaffed: there should be 3 active officers, but Chris has been off sick for many weeks, another team member left months ago (a current vacancy), and so Glynis impossibly overloaded. In any case, it was recommended that Friends reps take their own notes during any walkabouts (eg Spotlight meetings) and keep an ongoing list of maintenance issues/repairs etc as this should provide continuity and save time and stress. **Agreed: Dave to arrange a Forum/Zonal Team meeting when Chris is back at work. We want Emma (Engagement Officer) to also attend.**

- **Forum working groups & roles** – at the last meeting we discussed the various jobs/roles to ensure the Forum functions well – a list of these roles was appended to the last minutes and volunteers were sought to help out. It had been agreed then to develop a co-ordination group. Reps who've volunteered previously to be part of this group include Ceri, Dave, Clare, Joyce, Klaus, Cathy, Heskith and Joan. **Agreed:** *Dave will convene a zoom meeting of the group to take this forward... all Friends reps welcome to join it to help out.*
- Forum Diversity & Inclusion Group: Set up by the Forum to share experiences and good practice on strengthening our groups and their diversity eg regarding age and ethnicity. Had 2 successful meetings but not met for a while. **Agreed:** *can someone volunteer to contact Dave to jointly convene the next meeting (could be on zoom)? More members also welcome.*
- **Council Attendance at Forum** – Its useful to have senior managers present eg. Simon Farrow, who can commit to actioning things agreed, rather than a less senior officer passing on requests. Would be also useful for Tree & Conservation Officers to attend. Also, occasional attendance of Cllr Emily Arkel (Cabinet Lead for Culture, Communities & Leisure) might be useful. **Agreed:** *Clare to draft a letter with specific invitations.*
- **Venue of next Forum meeting** – Forum reps attend from north, south, east & west of the borough. There was a discussion on our email list on whether the venue should sometimes be in the west. Bruce Castle Museum, as usual, has been booked for the year & costs covered by the Parks Service. Most attendees seemed happy with this. **Agreed:** *We will keep this under review. Thunder (from Queens Wood) volunteered to investigate & suggest a potential future venue in the West.*
- **London & National Updates** – London Friends of Green Spaces Network have set up a Commercial Events Working Group which Finsbury Park and other key sites are involved with. It would be good to get a financial breakdown of Finsbury Park commercial funds raised and how they are spent. LFGN also have other Working Groups that Friends reps can join eg on biodiversity, climate adaptation. LFGN hold regular meetings and seminars, and Dave forwards their bulletins to our email list.
- **AOB - BMX sport racing track:** Ken Floyd (previously of Friends of Lordship Rec) wants to establish a competition standard BMX track (football-pitch size) in N. London somewhere, like the one he helped set up in Brockwell Park where he now lives. Lordship Rec has 3 cycling facilities already. Can anyone think of any other potential sites?

PART 2 - Council officers joined the meeting at 11am

- **Brief reports from local groups:**

Queen's Wood: Some good volunteering days, including an ITV show – 2 new members gained as a result. Working with TCV, doing Moss & Lichen walks. Calendar of similar events. Flood Mitigation Scheme: no update yet on developing a new plan.

Parkland Walk: Unhappy with path re-surfacing consultation. Feels predetermined. Need maintenance/revenue funding. New management plan needed, vital for volunteering work. Surveys needed & plans can't go ahead without communication. Moss Walk planned for Summer. Need a breakdown of the accessibility plan costs including bridge access.

Downhills Pk: Planted bulbs will flower soon. Whips to be planted early March. Old hard core needs to be removed from tennis court renovation project. Clare will contact Paul Ely re new playzone. Spotlight walk. 20th anniversary of their flagship Art in the Park annual event. Local people have made a memorial in the park for a local youth.

Down Lane Pk: Cycling, walking and football groups. Lots of user engagement, especially through the Users Community Forum and the Living Under One Sun community building (which hosts a vibrant range of activities). £2m available for regeneration (new community hub building planned, etc) due to all the local development. Works will mean substantial part of park closed off – needs to be managed properly. Concern for child safety re proposal to remove railing between park & road. Tennis courts need cleaning.

Chestnuts Pk: Borough-wide public toilets consultation by the Loos for Haringey campaign, to be circulated by Ceri – please respond. Chesnuts have one of only 3 public loos in Haringey parks (apart from those in cafes). Working with Kristie (projects team) on new park masterplan. The large and controversial flood basin works got planning approval despite Friends' opposition – but plan has now been abandoned following intervention by Cabinet Members Cllrs Emily Arkel & Mike Hakata. The highways dept plan around underground streams would have used a substantial part of the only open

field in the park (not the 2% stated). Friends felt ignored and forced into confrontation. Relations need mending. Friends now 6 months behind with £10K funding. Working on 7 areas in park. Feeling that the Council does not stand up for the park's interests, so despite the huge housing development planned at the adjacent St Ann's Hospital site, no additional funding for park seems to have been secured. Urgently need renewal of Community Centre lease, as without it, can't fundraise; building is dilapidated. Problem with cars in Centre drive. Friends say thank you for revamped tennis courts, now ready & will hold celebration. And thank you for the recent additional gardening work & more people on the team.

Lordship Rec: 200 attended the Friends annual wassail celebration of fruit trees, including lantern-making, music, procession, apple cake and drinks. The Friends hold around a dozen volunteering sessions each month including in the river channel, orchard, woodland, litter-picking group etc. Putting in lots of funding applications, including efforts to further improve the lake area (a new dipping platform recently completed). They aim to expand the annual Tottenham Flower & Produce Show on September 14th into a Tottenham Green Fair – contact them if you'd like to help organise (planning meeting on 20th March).

Tower Gardens: Twice monthly meetings. Saplings & bulbs planted. Last year saw improvements to play area. Management Plan being developed. TCV involved. Aiming for Green flag in future.

Bruce Castle Pk: Monthly litter picks with around 20 people. 50 people joined a Tree Walk looking at the oaks. There's a working group to improve playground as a lot of young families use the park – have done a parents' survey. Paddling pool 25 years old due to be renovated. Parks Service vehicles driving over grass corners. MUGA is being improved (£120k) with lighting etc - Friends don't feel like they're involved in discussion of latest plans & would like to understand and shape the plans. Would like regular meetings with Parks Service.

Markfield Pk: Friends are active and meeting regularly. 4 trees to come down for variable reasons. New community garden.

Belmont Rec: Written report received. Group going for about 1 year. They have drafted and consulted over their own plan for park improvements and regeneration, also involving the parents of the adjacent school.

Manchester Gdns & Paignton Pk: Regular litter pick & planning to make the pick more social to encourage more people. Working with Emma (Parks Engagement) to develop partnership relationship with Triangle Centre especially for bigger events planned for later in the year. Events planning group formed. Funding application submitted. Working with Sahina (Parks Operations) on litter collection & deep cleans when required. Bulbs, geraniums, lavender planted. Playground needs renovation. Need updated management plan.

Coldfall Woods & Muswell Hill Playing Fields: Meadow funding. Rattleplug plants. Thames21 application for stream/drainage project. Stream quite polluted. Diseased ash trees felled without consultation. Attended presentation of mapping for ancient woodland.

The Greens Bounds Green: Written report circulated. Christmas carols event the best yet. V active programme, inc regular litter pick, egg hunt, rose garden maintenance. Seeking new, improved timber trail to replace one removed... plus 12 new trees to be planted.

Priory Common: All ticking over fine. **Rectory Gardens:** All fine.

The Paddock: Leased to TCV. No update from the Friends.

■ **Council responses:**

Queen's Wood: Will take drainage issue back to Simon

Parkland Walk: Will take issues back to Glynis. Will take problem with sooty bark disease & what to do with risings to Alex/Annabel.

Downhills: will take back issue re removal of old hardcore from tennis courts.

Down Lane: Issues noted.

Chestnuts: will take back Centre lease / car access issue.

Bruce Castle: will address tyre damage again. Playground questionnaire – communication with project team.

Belmont: Note communication issue when emailing Chris, who has been off sick, but now doing some work from home - copy in Glynis & Sahina.

- **TCV update (Cassandra):** See their regular bulletins regarding all their activities. Been working with Parkland Walk. The Paddock – developing a robust, long-term, financial model. Seeking funding/sponsorship for wildlife surveys. Half-term educational activities incl free bird boxes, whips. Training programme includes coppicing (with Friends of Lordship Rec), hedge laying, fungi and mosses ID. As discussed at last meeting keen to see a Forum/TCV bio-diversity working group with focus on recording surveys – meeting could be called soon, all groups welcome to join.

- **Community engagement & mapping (Emma)**: See detailed report for the Forum before xmas, circulated to all groups. Mapping of potential local partners across the borough using spreadsheet with visual map. Can do mapping for individual friends groups if they contact her, and help groups develop partnerships.
- **Updates/issues from Council**:
 - **Safer Parks for Women & Girls**: There is a wider Women and Girls Safety Network involving different council services; monthly meetings; Inspired by the national report and conference 'Making Space for Girls'. Emma to circulate an update. Paul Ely/Playzone project aware of girl/women access issues and asks Friends Groups (especially those with PLayerzones and MUGAs) to contact him if women/girls in their group wish to join a short-term focus group specifically on MUGAs eg re access, entrances, floodlighting etc. Roseline (Down Lane Pk) is interested, have a young women cycling project, but issue with language/communication. Martin raised issue of need to repair lamppost lighting eg in Tottenham Green East, Down Lane. Quicker action needed where there are safety concerns.
 - **Budget update**: No Parks Operations cuts as far as Sahina is aware. Some unfilled managerial posts frozen. Maybe £50k saving on events.
 - **Parks Staffing**: Sahina has been recruiting to fill front line grounds staff posts. More applicants thanks to Friends helping publicise.
 - **Zonal Team Meeting**: Dave to pursue with Glynis.
 - **Recycling & Waste**: Keen to get it back into parks. Forum are a key stakeholder in developing an effective strategy. Forum thought it should involve green groups, schools, residents associations etc.
- **Protecting greenspace**
 - **Parkland Walk encroachment**: needs to be tackled swiftly by Council legal dept. No working group meeting for 1 year.
 - **Ongoing issue of rough sleepers in parks**: Occurring in many green spaces. Understand that the process is Friends report to Council, who report to Streetlink to get advice and support for the homeless individuals. Then the Council enforcement teams can take action.
- **AOB**
 - **Could a competition-standard BMX track be located in North London?**: It was suggested an area by library on Shepherds Hill might be investigated.
 - **Green Flag Report** for Queen's Wood requested by Friends, as they contain useful detail. Other groups can request their reports.