

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum – General Meeting 6 June 2026

Present: Friends Groups reps: Dave Morris (Lordship Rec) – chaired, Deborah Cawkwell (Manchester Gdns, Paignton Pk) – minuted, Peter Gray (Nightingale Gdns), Klaus Kuerner (Bruce Castle Pk), Chloe Chandler (Hartington Pk, Carbuncle Passage), Filiz Erol (Fairland Pk), Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec), Robert How (Brunswick Pk), Cathy Meus (Parkland Walk), Carol Gibbons (Manchester Gdns, Paignton Pk), Laurie White (FROGS), Sara Maguire (Chestnuts Pk), Frances Saunders (Hornsey Tower), Thunder Raven-Stoker (Queen's Wood). Rachel Hodgkin (FOE). Anna Pole (TCV). **From 11am: Council reps:** Glynis Kirkwood-Warren (Parks Zonal Manager), Lily Labonte (Physical Activity Officer) **FGs Apologies:** Quentin Given (The Paddock), Robyn Thomas (Alexandra Pk), F o Alexandra Palace Station, Vicci (F o Muswell Hill PF and Coldfall Woods), Ceri (Chestnuts), Claire (Downhills), Susan (Nightingale Gdns) **LBH Apologies:** Emma Betts (Parks Inclusion Officer), Simon Farrow (Head of Parks and Climate Action)

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: April 2026 minutes agreed as accurate

A. KEY FORUM ISSUES

Welcome to new groups: F o Fairland Pk doing well as a new group.

Playgrounds: Upgrades to many sites have begun.

Paddling pools: There is new funding for repairs to paddling pools.

Litter: Clean Team chronically understaffed. We have raised with new cabinet member. Previous years have had additional agency staff in summer - all recruitment has been frozen due to Council financial crisis. Issues raised include bins overflowing, report any flytipping via Love Clean Streets app, encourage people to take litter away, mowing issues, need for bigger bins(?), gas bottles, small bottle tops, BBQs, only one enforcement officer.

Haringey Local Plan: Consultation over the previous winter. Our Tottenham set up an info and coordination page online - <https://ourtottenham.org.uk/haringey-draft-local-plan-2025/> There will be an official report and update as a result. Parks Dept needs to stand up for parks, but it often ends up being Friends Groups expected to do that.

Commercial events: Council have been trying to expand the number and spread of inappropriate and damaging commercial mega-events which exclude the public (eg in Finsbury Pk). A threat to Lordship Rec over the winter/spring was stopped only after intense effort by the Friends. The new (Green-led) regime at the Council had made clear campaigning promises to end (or at least immediately substantially reduce?) such events.

Adequate funding for green spaces: After our last meeting Forum reps did a photoshoot by the Bruce Castle Pk oak as part of a national day of local actions (over 200 actions) to raise the profile and needs of green spaces in the run up to the local government elections in May. Joan had designed a great banner calling on the Government to ensure 'Adequate Funding for All UK's Parks'. Dave sent out press release afterwards, and circulated the photo to other Forums around the UK.

Council and Cabinet: We noted that the Council is now run by the Green Party. Dave as Forum chair has written to the new Cabinet Member for parks, Cllr Wolson, seeking to brief her on the key strategic issues facing the Parks Service and aiming to ensure effective partnership and co-production with Friends Groups and the Forum. Lack of funding for the Council is the biggest problem. But the more financially constrained they are, the more they need to commit to working with and empowering Friends Groups. [Update: see reports circulated of the meetings with Cllr Wolson on 8th June and 19th August]

'Co-production': Good policy in principle, but it needs to work in practice, especially at site level.

Community Interest Levy funding: Brunswick Pk seeking access to such funding.

Parks Service: It seems that all teams are understaffed, overworked and struggling to do even the basic minimum. Maintenance budgets have been slashed. This can't be allowed to continue. Many of the Friends Groups help with some maintenance where they can (eg litter collection and horticulture), but this is no substitute for a properly run Service.

PART 2 - Council officer joined the meeting at 11am -----

B. BRIEF REPORTS FROM LOCAL GROUPS

MANCHESTER GDNS: ASB challenges continue . Council officer response: Enforcement officer working with HAGA alcohol charity. Community event (July?) with an eye to help people engage with the space in a neighbourly fashion.

PAIGNTON PK: Playground upgrade - some issues need resolving. Difficult to get engagement. *Council officer response: noted.*

FROGS / RUSSELL PK: Issues with litter eg irregular schedules, bags not collected. Friends' Summer Festival – Sunday 13 July. Planted a lot of trees, trying to keep watered. There's a tap.

PARKLAND WALK: [See full report circulated before the meeting]. Friends' 'Litter Marshals' scheme keeping litter at bay (apart from bins, which were unemptied for over 1 month). Viaduct and ASB – CIL money, but concerned park are going ahead without consultation. Benches removed – unhelpful. Can be a disincentive to ASB if ordinary people sitting there. Limited funding – won't be enough for path resurfacing which is key. Group wants to be more involved in the decision-making. ASB – various places where drug dealing going on. Stakeholder walk coming up re repairs and maintenance – don't want to be raising the same issues each time. *Council officer response: Benches will be put back after re-surfacing. Recognise communications could be improved. Florence Rd drug dealing – Enforcement officer is liaising with SNT. Encroachment issues are being reviewed - need to discuss with the Friends.*

BRUNSWICK PARK: Small group. Do monthly litter pick. BBQ issues – disposing on flower beds, etc. Wild flower meadow area – Not being properly managed. As chair – no contact directly about anything happening. £80k CIL funding for park – want to speak to someone responsible. *Council officer response: Will research tool for collecting bottle tops. Byelaws re BBQs – there will be new revised draft byelaws coming soon, then consultation with the Forum and the public. NCIL funding for play is £84k. NCIL money once allocated stays available.*

NIGHTINGALE GDNS: Group is expanding and having fun: sharing seeds, growing new trees and watering, doing litter picks. Appreciate recent council help re litter and bins. All bird boxes installed now have nests. *Council officer response: Noted that litter bags left next to a bin are from the volunteer pickers. Need to liaise with Cristina, and use Council bags.*

BRUCE CASTLE PK: AGM due tomorrow after their monthly litter pick. Klaus will step down as chair. Their annual open theatre performance is due in August - Peter Rabbit. There is a draft conservation plan for Castle & park – very long – good news – extra protection. Charity being set up by the community to promote the historic area as a Cultural quarter. Playground moving forward - works delayed until after summer to ensure kids' access during holidays. Friends have a playground working group liaising with Council. MUGA being upgraded. Issues with BBQs, and rats. *Council officer response: Byelaws in place. Need signage otherwise can't do enforcement. Gas canisters are a litter problem - mustn't be put in bins as can cause fires. Path being relaid in front of oak tree to ensure root protection*

LORDSHIP REC: Friends' various working groups busy during spring and summer months. Orchard group organised a successful bioblitz for local schoolkids. Issues with haphazard litter collection, partially mitigated by the Friends litterpicking group fortnightly sessions. Some proposed major tree works were postponed after the Friends commissioned their own expert survey. The annual Tottenham Flower & Produce Festival on 12 September has been organised through open meetings - Lottery funding secured, and much publicity has gone out. Friends 25th anniversary this year. Have produced a history exhibition charting the regeneration and community action/empowerment in the Rec. Displayed in the Hub café all of September. *Council officer response: Noted*

HORNSEY CHURCH TOWER: On 11 July holding a community open day – people can climb tower (only twice per year). Plan a teddy bear zip-wire experience – 20 year tradition. Dealing with excess of 3 cornered leek. Dog bin disgusting – need new one. Need access to water & electricity after school closes. Grass needs mowing in orchard area and garden of remembrance. A tree planted 2 yrs ago has gone missing. *Council officer response: Litter/waste is collected by the Highways team. Will ask tree officer re 3 cornered leek.*

CHESTNUTS PK: Things ticking over fairly well. Monthly gardening group – park gets little or no horticulture maintenance by the Parks Service except some fairly erratic mowing. Support lobbying against use of glyphosphate weed killer in parks. Very happy with new playground, despite some delays in completion. The sensory garden has now been incorporated into the main play area. Grateful for TCV support. Happy to support the Monsurra festival, open to all. Concern about a huge amount of people and boggy areas. Some courts are to be upgraded and become part of the MUGA. Litter from community centre needs to be emptied regularly. There is a drive to set up a new community-run Management body for the Chestnuts community centre. *Council officer response: Policy is not to use Glyphosphate except for major problems. Workers are used to using it for many years. Glynis will come back to group with definitive answer. (Note: We asked for a clarifying communication from council). Got environmental impact money – which was used for painting.*

FAIRLAND PK: Group recently relaunched. Last 2 mths grown from 8 to 67 – mostly parents at the adjacent school.

Have put up posters and set up a whatsapp group. They are getting volunteers offering to help with fundraising etc. There are bank acct issues to sort out since the re-launch with new officers. Plan Bio-blitz next weekend. Want to create magical mini-beast habitats. Thinking of which activities to organise – maybe Green Lanes lantern parade, in collaboration with F of Railway Fields. Met Chris (Zonal team). Need a large box for storage. Bins are in poor condition and there's constant litter. Have been promised self-closing gates. *Council officer response: Need to know what size box for storage is required, and agree a site. Self-closing gates – Got a confirmation that would get 2 – need an additional one. Bins: council prefer wyvern double bin. Prob need one just outside park too. Identify via Chris, but all current bins allocated. Long list.*

ALEXANDRA PK: [In writing] Friends' crowd funder raised £20k for some walkways in wetland area. Apart from that, all the usual activities and issues. Plan a fete later this month to celebrate their 20th anniversary. *Council officer response: Noted*

HARTINGTON PK: Plan 11th July community event – funding secured. MUGA delayed until after summer. Need to know the mowing schedule. Playground fences need strengthening – people making gaps. A gate disappeared. Wild flower meadow needs maintenance - need TCV advice. CARBUNCLE PASSAGE: Being improved with new planting along its length. Some Japanese knotweed needs to be removed by the Council. *Council officer response: The play area fence gap is on urgent repairs list. Will pass on issues re Japanese knotweed.*

QUEENS WOOD: Organising lots of community activities at this time of year especially. Successful dawn chorus walk. 12th July family fun day. Bat walk at end of August. AGM July 7th. Some ongoing issues: a regular forest school has not been paying – they have an impact. Understood only one allowed, but 2/3 a week. There's NCIL funding for entrance. Frog Pool bin concern. Priory Gardens entrance is treacherous – want to slalom. *Council officer response: Unauthorised Forest schools usage – don't have admin resource to monitor but by next school year should have something in place. Frog Pool bin needs moving up to the café - has to move due to access issues.*

PADDOCK: [In writing]. The long awaited works have started so most of the site is fenced off. *Council officer response: Noted*

F o ALEXANDRA PALACE STATION: Holding an event to celebrate their 10th anniversary of managing gardens/tubs at the station. *Council officer response: Noted*

THE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS

Have 2 bases/offices – The paddock + Railway fields. Construction work since April on paths. Practical activities continue – eg reed bed. Some ASB issues: eg dumped lime bikes (so liaising with the company). Pond lining – have some People Need Parks Funding. Happy to help with Hartington Pk advice. TCV works in specific spaces (previously green flag & nature reserves). If advice needed, Friends Group reps can phone TCV, especially for sites not covered by their agreement with the Council – may be able to do short site visit, but tight on time. 3 cornered leek – will flag with council. Lot of staff sickness recently. Tried to share their monthly newsletter with Friends Forum mailing list. [Forum Note: Any rep posting to our list should use links not attachments.]

C. COUNCIL STRATEGIC UPDATES

WOMEN AND GIRLS SAFETY FOCUS GROUP: New members – would like to come to a Forum meeting. *Forum response: We'd welcome them having a slot - maybe to arrive around 11am, and then have their own 15min slot after the site reports?* **Funding:** Unsuccessful with recent Marathon Trust application.

PEOPLE NEED PARKS FUND: Friends Groups urged to consider applying (up to £1k) for outdoor events or enhancement work. *Forum response: We pointed out that Friends groups cannot and should not have to pay for waste collection after their events - but have been advised to use PNP funds to pay for this. Surely that's a poor use of the limited fund? The Clean team needs to be properly staffed.*

FINSBURY PARK ££s: One planned event this summer got cancelled and the Council lost a lot of funding it had expected. *Forum response: As we warned some years back, the Council should not have become dependent on controversial, inappropriate commercial events. We expect the new Cabinet to honour their pre-election promises.*

PARKS SERVICE STAFFING CRISIS: The recruitment freeze continues. All teams are below minimum functioning levels. Green Flag judges couldn't believe how the service is struggling on. Huge pressure on those who remain, so sickness and stress is an additional issue.

PARKS SERVICE BUDGET CRISIS: Same issue as staffing, above. Below minimum functioning maintenance levels across most teams. Capital budget for improvements will not be agreed until the cabinet meeting this month.

Internal application submitted in Feb/March for the capital funding (not revenue) that the Parks service needs: around £2.5million - but might only get 10% of that.

POLICIES: Glynis will be pushing forward the review of **park byelaws**. There will be some revision of the **Public Space Protection Orders**. **Glyphosphate** should only be used in exceptional circumstances. **Local Plan:** Noted.

LITTER/WASTE: Agree this is very challenging this year, with lack of staff in place. Really appreciate the many Friends Groups' litter teams. All new bins coming into parks in next months have been allocated - there's a rolling waiting list. Recognise there are also issues with bottle tops (hard to pick up, can be sharp), syringes (sharp), gas canisters (potentially flammable), invasive species removal (need special toxic waste bags). Also there are places that are difficult for Clean Team to collect from, eg Parkland Walk. Some equipment needs replacing. *Forum comment: We are the Council's key partners on the ground, including helping with litter collection, so we need the Parks Service to send us an email to forward to all groups which summarises all the waste collection issues and challenges, and suggest how collaboration could be improved. [Note: Not received yet]*

MOWING: Load of equipment got stolen from a depot – think now have managed to replace most. Mowing schedule can be weather-dependent. *Forum comment: Each Friends Group needs to have advance notice of mowing regimes / plans for their site. This could and should help re cans/bottle slicing, where new plants should be avoided, etc.*

PADDLING POOLS: Upgrades to the 3 pools are planned. Will conduct consultation for those sites after the summer.

PLAYGROUND UPGRADES: After feedback from Friends Groups the Council decided to pause any works during the school holidays. *Forum comment: Friends need to be involved with their own site's plans, in overseeing the works, and ensuring any post-works snagging is done.*

SPOTLIGHT WALKS: These should be happening regularly for all green flag sites & nature reserves, Friends Groups urged to attend, and a report should be circulated after each one. *Forum response: However, 2 years ago the Council cut the number of green flag sites from 22 to 11, so those cut often miss out on related services (spotlight walks, updated management plans etc). Active groups should make their own rolling notes of repair and maintenance needs identified on the walkabouts etc, & share with relevant officers/stakeholders.*

SITE ACTION PLANS: Previous site action plans (what staff will do and when) are well out of date (see eg in the Management Plans). Every site should have an action plan. *Forum response: We need to be involved in the discussion in more detail before it's rolled out*

BUILDING LEASES / PROPERTY SERVICES: Property Services have taken over from the Parks Service the arrangements for leases of buildings in parks. Big impact around borough as it has been taking longer to get leases sorted. Eg Rugby Club pavilion in Downhills. There's a lot to do (possibly 32 different buildings) – that's why it's taking so long. *Forum comment: This is a backward step as Property Services have a different, commercial, mindset and set of priorities. We need to ensure that buildings in public green spaces are not left empty, and are used for activities which enhance their green space.*