

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum – General Meeting 15 February 2025

Present: Friends Groups reps: Ceri Williams (Chestnuts Pk) - chaired, Deborah Cawkwell (Manchester Gardens, Paignton Park) - minuted; Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec), Vicci Midwinter (Coldfall Woods & Muswell Hill Playing Fields), Frances Sanders (Hornsey Church Tower), Thunder Raven-Stoker (Queen's Wood), Ricardo Johnson (Ducketts Common & Perth Road), Susan Beckett (Nightingale Gardens), Dayal Strub (Tower Gardens), Pat Farrington (Shepherds Hill), Chris Chadwick (Priory Park). **Apologies:** Dave Morris (Lordship Rec), Quentin Given (The Paddock), John Miles (Parkside Malvern, Haringey Rivers), Cathy Meeus (Parkland Walk), Klaus Kuerner (Bruce Castle Pk), Anna Pole (TCV), Clare Parry (Downhills Pk), Pamela Harling (Tottenham Green, Tottenham Cemetery & Wolves Lane), Robyn Thomas (Alexandra Park) **From 11am: Council reps:** Glynis Kirkwood-Warren (Zonal Officer Manager); Lily Labonte (Physical Activity Officer), Emma Betts (LBH Community & Partnerships Engagement Officer), Sahina Choudhury (LBH Head of Parks Operations). **Apologies:** Annabel Foskett (LBH Conservation Officer), Simon Farrow (Head of Parks & Leisure)

PART 1

- **Minutes of November meeting:** agreed - accurate

- **Matters arising:**

- **New funding:** Very pleased re new 'planning gain' funding for playgrounds (for 8 parks). Some concerns re possible ring-fencing of that funding, eg, would it be limited to equipment for very small children, where in some parks, there is more of a need to provide for older children/young people.
- **New Friends Groups:** Ricardo interested in setting up a Friends group for Perth Road Playing Field & playing field used by school near Perth Road.
- **Bio-diversity:** Friends need more support and communication with the Council's conservation officer, Annabel Foskett in order to carry out our own responsibilities. Ideally attendance at this group meeting, or setting up alternative meetings, plus conservation plan feedback/development, site meetings. Could someone deputise regarding this important issue for parks, if Annabel not available? Vicci to draft a letter outlining what is needed.
- **Minutes format:** It would be useful to have an action points section to make monitoring easier and to return to them at the beginning of the next meeting, to follow up on actions agreed by the parks service and others. Also, when groups can't attend and send a (usually quite long) report, Dave usually prints out these reports to give to the Council officers attending the meeting - should a summary be incorporated into the minutes as well?

- **PART 2 - Council officers joined the meeting at 11am**

Brief reports from local groups:

- **Hornsey Church Tower Gardens:** Xmas lights & great celebration with about 400 people. The Friends provided mulled wine & festive food. Generous collection. 26 Feb - shed, gardening continues twice monthly, removal of ivy, awaiting borough tree survey - substantial bough has fallen. Pond: every season it gets larger apparently due to subsidence resulting in restricted access. Not yet had the tree to be replaced. 75th anniversary coming up of garden of remembrance & would appreciate any help.
- **Priory Park:** All paths cleared well. The whole area looks excellent. Efficient tree planting. Tree moved that was blocking a view. Last year planted new hedge with TCV & council & gardening group & David Theakston - a great day! Calendar every year - sold 200 copies - fountain on front. Want complete refurb of fountain. AGM - plan to set up centenary committee for next year - especially in regard to ideas for St Paul's Fountain renovation. Gardening group: good work, use of old tennis hut important for storing gear, etc, but roof needs sorting. Had an offer from a roofer to do the labouring for free. Need to talk to Glynis.
- **Queen's Wood:** Relatively quiet. Working groups re-organized due to storms. Online zoom talk about the ancient trees. Cafe went viral due to a 'hidden gem' Tik Tok - massive increase in people, who were queuing 100 yards. Walks: blind ramblers (very popular last year), moss & dawn chorus. Enforcement officers - need more contact. Bin collections from frog pond - ropy. Management plan?
- **Manchester Gardens:** Prickly planting needed at back. Regular monthly litter pick continues. Shout out for Ken & Ilario who collect the rubbish from Manchester Gardens & Paignton Park - really good relationship with them - having the same people really helps.

- **Paignton Park:** Very happy re new funding. The playground is in terrible state. Very happy re Tiny Forest: soil has been tested and now awaiting the next stage. Bulbs planted. Regular litter pick with refreshments. Reggeativity class will start in the park in as part of HC Spring Programme. Need pot holes fixing in the centre of the park because some people find them to dangerous to play sport. Would like some areas left unmown to allow for insect-friendly wild flowering.
- **Ducketts Common:** Basketball works, nets, etc.
- **Perth Road:** Enquiry
- **White Hart Lane Rec:** Hesketh Benoit is most across this park.
- **Coldfall Woods & Muswell Hill Playing Fields:** now have an Insta account. Meadow: hoping it will thrive again this year. Dangerous items in the playground - would be great to get an update. Walks programme for the spring. A few encroachment issues - very cheeky - removal of hedgerows - reported.. Maidencroft consultancy - Joel. Concern that most trees are the same age & very limited species (concerns re diseases) & need to do some coppicing. Controversial issues re planting new specifiers. Destructive squirrels stripping bark (also in Queen's Wood).
- **Tower Gardens:** Transitioned to bio-diversity plan ourselves with TCV. Would like contact with Conervation Officer. 2 weeks ago woodchip was dumped where bulbs had been planted. Used to speak with Parks Service manager Christina, but now don't get much engagement. Been trying to deal with dumping by putting up signs. Keen to learn how others deal with these issues.
- **Shepherds Hill Gardens:** Thank you to Glynis for November general advice. Need good practice on woodland management & dealing with fires. Note that every park in Berlin has a concrete table tennis table, which attracts people. (More background about the Gardens - having not attended for a while - than aspirations - this is a reset. The Gardens are a 'pocket park'/hidden gem, a small accidental nature reserve with a mosaic of habitats - please do come & visit. Home to the most diverse hedge in Haringey! Working on the restoration of nature - awaiting discussion with AF on conservation issues. Initial aim to make the park safer for people with green windows. Currently, a bit of a mono-culture with dominant ivy. Awaiting report on dead trees & branches. Would like a greater variety of wild flowers. Previously, had an owl visitor. Friends group since 2007 - never been constituted. No public liability. Shout-out for TCV without whom we could not manage.
- **Lordship Rec:** Continues to be popular & well used, but lack of maintenance. Good relationship with zonal officer Chris Poore, but need more supervision of contractors. 300 attended the Friends' fantastic wassail event in January. Coppicing & pruning workshops coming up. Now getting ready for the Friends' annual Flower & Produce Festival - there's a questionnaire for anyone who attended event last year. Problem with hedges cut back - exposed a whole heap of broken bikes near the front entrance - unsightly. International award-winning short documentary made in Lordship Rec - 'Spring Came' about the healing properties of parks
- **Nightingale Gardens:** Few volunteers - down to 4 - & struggling. Past 3 months 10 new trees have gone in with help from Groundworks (urban forest project). But there is a watering issue. Xmas lights in tree with notice "from volunteers" that people liked. Insta for a couple of years with 250 followers. New Zonal person, but no reply so far - would a meeting. 4 more borders at the front of the park. Also, take care of Dingle Dell, where there's been a lot of dumping. Would like to install dead hedges (have been collecting xmas trees for this purpose). Have volunteers for the job, but need some expertise. Subsidence problem with neighbouring baptist church: need an update from Tree Officer Alex, especially regarding the treasured trees. Would like Sahina's team to leave some parts unmown.
- **Chestnuts Park:** Group going since 2000 - same women are still involved, but now they have grandkids not young kids. Problems with council failures, especially pressing ahead with planning permission for damaging project, have meant some of the younger people lost heart. Sessions take place with Chestnuts School eco-committee. Preparing for AGM. Help from TCV 4 times per year laying the perimeter hedge. Regular gardening group. Christie handed over to Emma to help complete the master plan which is now urgently needed. Need facilities for older children. Endemic problems with lack of maintenance. Can't link with Zonal Officer. Now got a shed, which is great for tools, but men are peeing against it as well as defecating elsewhere in the park), need the public toilets to be functional. Lost Jenny & Sean - daily early morning litter pickers - retired to Ireland. Shout out for council staff Ken & Ilario who collect the rubbish. Need a better parks communication system to report problems seen by staff every day.

Council Responses:

- **Bio-diversity:** Council representation at the Forum meetings - Glynis to take back requests
- **New playground funding:** Glynis said the Council were hiring new parks project officer & it will be their single job to deal with that pot of money. Ad out. In post April 2025 up & running. Sarah Jones had written to the parks receiving the funding regarding availability for an initial meeting. Simon Farrow had planned to attend this meeting, but couldn't at the last minute.
- **Parks enforcement officers:** Started at the beginning of the year - they will be able to issue fixed penalty notices, eg, dog control, dog fouling, litter, fly-tipping, encroaching, environmental crimes. 2 for whole borough focusing on the hotspots + inspections of others. Working hours - currently 9-5, five days per week. Working patterns may possibly be changed. Not sure whether they will wear a uniform due to possible attack & thinking that they may be more effective in own clothes, which would enable them to observe more discretely. There are questions around body cameras. They are not the police: present to curtail, cannot arrest, will have a conversation first - not straight in with a penalty notice.
- **Signage:** There is some budget for signage - must go through council through a particular company. Some noticeboards at Priory Park corroded, so would really like new boards for the centenary celebration. There is an accessibility plan for tactile maps working with the RNIB.
- **Love Clean Streets:** Do use this app - the reports re dumping of rubbish feed through to the Parks team & all the officers have now been trained on it.
- **Mowing & planting maps:** Should not be reliant on colour, as Ops Dept do not currently have a colour printer.
- **Updating of Bye-laws for parks:** Still in process of writing.

Council Response (Local Groups):

- **Hornsey Church Tower Gardens:** Contact Glynis re ivy removal - licence required. Contact Alex re the tree survey & fallen bough.
- **Priory Park:** Tennis hut roof - passed to corp landlord for assessment. Fountain - Glynis & Chris walkabout - intro Ann Poole (Christine was covering). Glynis interested in centenary committee.
- **Queen's Wood:** Bin too heavy to empty - has to come out when new path work done - seeking another location & will monitor littering in that space.
- **Manchester Gardens:** Berberis with 2 inch thorns will be planted in the problem area backing onto the homes in April in the new financial year.
- **Paignton Park:** Areas can be left unmown - need to make clear maps that don't rely on colour as Sahina only has a black & white printer.
- **Perth Road:** The 2 areas of land belong to different people (rugby club & a school), who Riccardo would need to contact for liaison re setting up a Friends' group.
- **Ducketts Common:** Hesketh updated info then - Glynis attended.
- **White Hart Lane Rec:** Glynis having trouble getting through - Friends group doesn't seem to have been so active.
- **Lordship Rec:** Dumped bikes - Glynis is 100% on it - pruning the hedge clarified the problem. Glynis will write a specific email about this.
- **Coldfall Woods:** Letters re encroachment are going out - if no response within 14 days, it starts getting much tougher. Re light pollution, more info to be gathered. Reports coming from AF. Playground surface is being replaced. Seasonal visitors barriers - more substantial than bollards - will be in before June.
- **Tower Gardens:** Jake working hard re homelessness & fly-tipping. Glynis will raise the communication issue.
- **Shepherds Hill:** Glynis reckons there are people out there who would be willing to help. Ops could attend meeting on 19th.
- **Nightingale Gardens:** Do use Love Clean Streets - those reports feed through to the Parks team. TCV do dead hedging - can be hired for £500 for a session. For clarification, Council contract with TCV is not

for every park in the borough. There is BAT (Bio-diversity Action Team) - Glynis/Emma to mention to Anna at TCV aim to have site meeting & Friends could attend. Maybe Jake could do a visit & help with making a map

- **Chestnuts Park:** Water hydrant issue is known. No money until new financial year April 2025. PSPAs - every year re-consulted on. Urination: if homeless each individual needs to be dealt with individually.

■ **AOB**

Safer Parks for Girls & Women Group meeting - face-to-face on 26 March.