

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum – General Meeting 5 April 2025

Present: Friends Groups reps: Deborah Cawkwell (Manchester Gardens, Paignton Park) - minuted; Dave Morris (Lordship Rec) – chaired; Thunder Raven-Stoker (Queen's Wood); Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec); Joyce Rosser (Priory Common + Rectory Gdns); Dayal Strub (Tower Gardens); Pamela Harling (Tottenham Green, Tottenham Cemetery & Wolves Lane); Ceri Williams (Chestnuts Pk); Laurie White (Noel Park FROGS); Ben (Brunswick Park); John Dawkin (Queen's Wood); Alec (Ducketts Common); Yasmin(?), Anna (Conservation Volunteers); Ricardo Johnson (Ducketts Common & Perth Road); Dr Jackie Jeffrey and Hesketh Benoit (White Hart Lane & Ducketts Common - sport), Chris (Priory Park) **From 11am:**
Council reps: Glynis Kirkwood-Warren (Zonal Officer Manager); Lily Labonte (Physical Activity Officer), **FGs Apologies:** Clare Parry (Downhills Pk), Vicci Midwinter (Coldfall Woods & Muswell Hill Playing Fields), Frances Sanders + Peter (Hornsey Church Tower), Robyn Thomas (Alexandra Park), Quentin Given (The Paddock), Pat (Shepherds Hill), Sheila (Bluebell Wood), John Miles (Parkside-Malvern RA, + Haringey Rivers Forum), Dan (Belmont Rec), Susan Beckett (Nightingale Gardens), Cathy Meeus (Parkland Walk), Klaus Kuerner (Bruce Castle Pk) **LBH Apologies:** Emma Betts (LBH Community & Partnerships Engagement Officer), Chris Cavalier (Operations Manager), Annabel Foskett (Conservation), Simon Farrow (Head of Parks & Leisure)

PART 1

- **Minutes of February meeting:** agreed as accurate

■ FORUM ISSUES

- **Forum Co-ordination group:** There is now a WhatsApp group for any reps wanting to help coordinate the Forum between meetings.
- **Forum Inclusion and Diversity Working Group** – aiming to get this group back up and running between now & next meeting. (Deborah and Dave to discuss)
- **Nature conservation issues:** The Conservation Officer, Annabel, cant make Saturdays. We've been requesting regular updates and a mid-week meeting (possibly on zoom?) be set up for her and reps to chat about any issues eg enabling local projects / Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (under review, but we've heard nothing for 18mths) / planning policies and threats to greenspace / funding opportunities / nature reserves / management plans / etc. Once its been agreed then all groups will be invited.
- **Haringey Women and Girls Group:** Deborah attended last meeting/gathering (MUGA takeover) in Finsbury Park. Includes a group of young women volunteers who are being consulted over how to make parks safer and more attractive to girls and young women. Deborah to be our delegate / liaison person.
- **People Need Parks funding:** There's a new 2025-6 round of funding to apply for - for Haringey parks' community events, activities and projects.
- **Haringey Age Well event** - will take place again at Bruce Castle Park in the Autumn
- **Forum's 'Walk In The Park' booklets** – Dave brought some & reminded all we still have 2-3,000 of these brilliant free booklets left to distribute. Contact Dave or Joan to come and collect some from Lordship Hub.

- **New Groups: Noel Park FROGS (Friends of Green Spaces)** - 10-year 'Big Local' funding for Noel Park ends soon. A sensational new £400k playground for Russell Pk has just been opened. The new group for Russell Pk has emerged from that. There had been friends group in the past. **Friends of New Road Park** – helped plant new Tiny Forest, which will activate the neglected space and re-energise that group.
- **Playgrounds funding:** 8 sites are to have substantial funding (£1.5m) to upgrade existing playgrounds this year in Tottenham and Wood Green (as the money is from Tottenham 'Section 106' developer funding). The relevant Friends Groups are to be involved. Each park chosen has been offered a meeting with Simon Farrow & cabinet member Emily Arkell. Cathy (Parkland Walk) raised issue of Community Interest Levy (CIL) funding being allocated for a new playground which could have inappropriately affected the nature reserve, with no consultation with the Friends or

possibly even the Parks Service. There should have been proper consultation and collaboration in advance. However, plans have been amended and hopefully it'll work out OK now.

- **Protection of sites / Fields in Trust Covenants:** Following lobbying by the Forum 8 or 9 years ago the Council agreed that all Haringey's designated public spaces (the 60 or so set out in the Local Plan) would be covenanted to be protected for all time. Only about 12-15 have been completed by the legal dept so far, and no more during the last 5 years. Dave has been assured, informally, that the policy and intent still applies. Dave wrote to Simon Farrow for a formal update but has yet to receive a reply.
- **Tennis Courts:** Friends of Chapmans Green raised concerns about the introduction of charging and pre- booking of their tennis courts. This follows Lawn Tennis Assoc 'Levelling Up' funding (from the Government) to Councils coming with strings ie insisting on certain criteria. There is a national 'Tennis For Free' petition about this - Dave sent petition to our email list. There seem to be a number of issues, with different views and

experiences at different sites – including booking system, payments (too high? Is the income reinvested in the courts?), access/locking system, free periods (generally weekdays up to 4pm), floodlights (for and against), tree protection, maintenance (sweeping and repairs). The hope is that more people and a more diverse range of people will use the facilities – but is this being monitored? (and how is the previous and current open/free usage monitored?) Is it happening as planned? Also similar issues for basketball courts and MUGAs. We agreed to promote the national petition.

- **Commercial events:** Friends of Chestnuts raised concerns about a 17 July commercial event. Prices too high/excluding local people. Council not charging enough to organisers. Also the bond should be very high (at least £5k) & should insist on matting. No proper vehicle access. A boggy park is not great for an event with a large stage. Also discussed Priory Park commercial event (world's biggest inflatable obstacle course). Friends of Finsbury Park have proposed a compromise re the years of controversy over the mega events there – suggest they should only happen every 2 years, and the Council to charge the organisers more. (Forum agreed to support). There were questions about the Council's policy that a % of any income from commercial events should go to the Friends Group - needs update and clarification.

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

BRIEF REPORTS FROM LOCAL GROUPS:

Noel Park The new Friends group, FROGS, to help care for and animate their local green spaces, especially Russell Park. Estate is 100 years old. New playground from £400k 'Big Local' investment. Group is very proud and part of the celebration event. Problem: no community hall, but shipping container in park. Plans for a 20 July Festival. Tables for stalls will be available.

The Paddock Contract with Thames Water signed to incorporate their land into the site. Contract for next phase of refurbishment works also signed. Need to deal with big increase litter & dumping. Friends & TCV (who run the building there) working together.

Lordship Rec 6 community events in the Shell Open Theatre this summer. The Friends working groups continue to hold practical volunteering sessions (10 or 11 every month) to help maintain and manage the site. Investment this year will include £120k repairs to The Hub, £250k for repairs and improvements to the playground, and a new Changing Places unit (for people with major mobility disabilities) next to Hub. Planning has started for this year's annual Tottenham Flower & Produce Festival on 13th Sept.

Ducketts Common Holiday programmes, gym use numbers through roof. Small problem with drugs - police stopped it. More parents & kids doing basketball. Access 2 Sport grant for the court: resurfacing, floodlights. Nature around park - kids looking at wildlife & basketball players looking too. Storage unit required. Bird feeding problem, loaves of bread - sign vanished after 2 weeks. Wild flower meadow - mini flooding - tap not repaired - lost a chunk of the meadow - needs to be sorted. Weeds issue. Meadow needs maintenance.

White Hart Lane Trying to revive the Friends Group. There's another community group active at the site too. It is hoped both will work together as the site is large but needs a lot of attention and investment. Other people approached re use eg. blind cricket club (some England internationals). Need dog walkers not to walk across when playing.

Parkland Walk Organised some recent events – eg a good speaker from Bug Life. Litter pick next weekend. Management Plan review – urgently need update from Annabel (Conservation Officer). She's working in background on funding - want to use for plant survey, but needs to be re-designated - seems to be stuck in bureaucracy. May lose well-qualified surveyor, if can't give the go ahead. Any keen botanists invited to join the Friends. The path resurfacing for cyclists has been cancelled as inappropriate for a nature reserve (as the Friends had said). But some patchy resurfacing is needed / still outstanding - using 'like-for-like' materials: hoggins: pebbles & clay. Bridge replacements works continue. Lot of concrete. Could re-open end of May.

Chestnuts Park Hedge laying endlessly ongoing. Friends meeting once per month - AGM early June. Missing members who did a daily litter pick – made a visible difference in park. Will celebrate new playground funding. Further year's delay on Master Plan - consultation done on playground. Might get some work in kind from builders. Hoping for funding meeting with Simon Farrow and Emily Arkel. Recent Spotlight walkabout with Chris Poore didn't cover everything esp as it was raining. Despite lots of things needing repair most were put back until a budget can be confirmed. Field is rutted & wet. Area around water hydrant permanently wet. Levelling of field very important. Very worried about coming commercial festival - has got bigger. Want to support nice things, but need assurances.

Tower Gardens Friends raised £400 for planting. Lots of dumping - trying to combat with signs. Help from residents. Council don't come often, but when they do, they are over-zealous with cutbacks. Silver birch donated + 2 trees from council - one has died. TCV have allocated 2 volunteering days this year. Discussed their new woodland walk - now spoiled by a homeless camp there. Council inspection found playground

unsafe & fenced it off without communication, so now no play area. But told there is a plan. Swings removed - feel they could have been fixed. Need play area back urgently! Keen to hear where council is on budgets and investment at beginning of financial year. Wheelchairs & buggies can't use one park entrance due to repairs needed. Bins - don't have cigarette/ashtray part so friends have put in sand flower pots.

Queen's Wood Ancient woodlands Management Plan has needed update for 4 years. Friends have pushed for a long time. Annabel has now produced a very detailed, good draft plan, which they are going to look at. Going to set the course for the Wood for many years. Need to look at resources. Big process.

Communications. Needs to be understood by council. Friends have usual programme of walks: blind ramblers (very popular), mosses (next weekend), dawn chorus (May). Doing 2 surveys: plants, hedgehogs (in conjunction with Highgate Wood). Also started tackling pennywort problem (since 2013) - takes over pond - going to use volunteers to hoik out. Haven't heard about film licenses for use of the wood.

Perth Road No news. **Priory Common orchard** Ticking over OK. **Rectory Gardens.** Ticking over OK.

Manchester Gardens Regular monthly litter pick continues with occasional 'add-ons', eg, celebration of International Women's Day by adding refreshments, book swap, bunting. Anti-social behaviour continues. Hope this improves with better relations about the issue with other agencies: Police, St Mungos, HAGA. Also, with new parks enforcement officers. Looking forward to the thorny planting at the back of the gardens where they back onto homes.

Paignton Park Tiny Forest planted. Great turnout (over 50 people over the day). Reggeactivity as part of Council Spring Programme on Saturdays. Regular monthly litter pick with refreshments. Bulbs planted by volunteers now blooming. Some problems with dogs & children pulling off heads (of plants). Octagonal bed planted up by volunteers using some plants supplied by Chris Poore. Posters designed & distributed around park to discourage litter (particularly terrible in playground) & encouraging people to leave the flowers to be enjoyed by everyone & be able to come again the following year. Preparing for Playground improvements project. Very glad to get the funding - playground in a terrible state with some equipment broken, some removed, rough edges & soft base areas coming away.

Priory Park Tennis hut - got free labour. Gardening group / Litter pick – filled 12/13 bags. Works in playground due to start. Friends AGM in early March - 20 people attended including Parks Service reps Glynis & Emma. Friends planning for park's centenary – including bringing of embankment stone from the 'City' to park. Maybe need 2 lorries - getting more expensive (but still cheaper than a park bench!). Need details of company from Glynis for doing the plinth of the water fountain.

Brunswick Park Still struggling to get people to engage. Working on repainting & maintenance. Hedgerows on corner - some almost 6ft. New camera through council. Fence to stop cars going on park - one removed - more posts continue to be removed. Meadow area put in last year.

Tottenham Cemetery Continue to discuss with management company - lot going on - very noisy + someone setting fires. Friends planning an event.

Bruce Castle Park Monthly litter picks (plus cake) continue. Plan their annual open theatre event.

Markfield Park Clearing of Moselle channel is in progress.

TCV Volunteering across 6 days of the week. Bio blitz this Saturday at Paddock. Maximising corporate volunteering (money goes back into supporting TCV) - Minimum 8 people & a day's work - council gives permission for this. Dave reminded TCV to send their newsletter round our email list each month.

Note: There were a number of other written reports circulated on our email list to all groups before the meeting. Dave printed them all out and handed them to Glynis.

RESPONSES BY GLYNIS (PARKS ZONAL TEAM MANAGER)

Enforcement Officers: Process: first they will investigate issues of reported concern (eg crime or ASB), then reach out to stakeholders (eg Friends Groups and Safer Neighbourhood Teams). Will soon be trained and empowered to issue fixed penalty notices. But would always aim to engage first.

Revision of Haringey Byelaws 2-year process. Model set promoted by Parks for London. Haringey could just have adopted all those, but didn't include encroachment issues (eg Parkland Walk). Need to complete internal discussions first, then engage the Friends Forum.

Spotlight Walks / Catch Ups Since the Council decided to reduce the number of annual green flag parks stakeholder Spotlight walkabouts are now called 'catch-ups'. Should result in an action plan with time scales. Good to have ward councillors present at stakeholder meetings.

Damage caused by hirers: For example, historic pillar damaged in Bruce Castle Park - council did recoup cost of repairs, not just deposit. If significant damage, then would be claimed back via insurance.

Tower Gardens: The Council is dealing with homelessness issues **Ducketts Common:** Storage is on order. **White Hart Lane** - The other community group who have stepped in to help are the Friends of Woodside Park - bulb and tree planting & litter picking. Glynis keen to touch base with all involved. **Parkland Walk:** Noted that there's always issues where the Highways Dept and Park Service overlap (eg re the Bridge repairs). **Chestnuts Park:** Water hydrant in Chestnuts to be fixed by 20 April. **Tower Gardens:** working with homelessness team - then when moved on, the hazardous waste team would come in with hazmat suits. Will then once again be a safe space to re-wild. Won't chop stuff down. Won't spray chemicals, if natural area. Swings being taken out because of 'bushells' - too old to replace. Will raise access issues with bins with Jake. **Ducketts Common** Signs against feeding birds (waste from local restaurants/bakeries?) removed immediately by someone. Will be replaced. Then will engage with those doing it. If fails, fixed penalty. Wild flower meadow - will take back to Annabel. **Queen's Wood:** Film licenses - same people as before. **Priory Park:** Issue with meadows noted **Russell Park:** Noted great work to install and celebrate new playground.

RESPONSES BY LILY (PARKS PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES OFFICER)

Elizabeth Place - 12 April event re the new playground + MUGA. **Wood Green Common:** New playzone: netball, outdoor gym **Manchester Gardens** - anti-social behavior, Lily working with HAGA & St Mungos. Balance lighting/nature. **Blind cricket** - Ricardo and Lily to talk.

Ageing Well - 20th Sept in Bruce Castle Park **Girls and Women** - Girls Take Over event in Finsbury Park. G&W Group - guest speakers - surveys in the park with girls & women on how safe they feel in parks - quite powerful - looking to take action. **What's On in Haringey website** – all groups urged to upload details of their events **Park runs:** Every Saturday in Lordship Rec (plus junior run on Sundays too), Finsbury Park, Priory Park and Alexandra Park

People Need Parks funding – this year again. Info will come out from Lily soon

EXTRA POINTS

Annual repairs budget: Glynis's project team is unsure what their 2024-5 budget will be. Last year only had £60k total with £34k going to ensuring the paddling pools are open in the summer*. Not sure how much other teams had, and will have. So only £26k for zonal team for all maintenance for all parks (hard stuff) in Haringey. Eg, small retaining walls - forced to remove capstones & store until money available. £80k - improvements to play areas £90k - improvements to footpaths. Dave: unclear which budgets are for what. Simon Farrow has said he hopes to come next time to set out budgets & staffing. We'd like this info in advance. We agreed we need this info from Simon Farrow so we can understand the challenges the Parks Service are facing.

Conservation: Annabel had sent in a few points/answers from our February meeting. Need a special meeting with her asap (see above).

Playgrounds: £1.5 million for 8 existing playgrounds. To be completed this financial year.

Byelaws: there is progress.

Commercial events in public green spaces: number of issues (laying groundwork for discussion at a future date): How is 'commercial event' defined? Are some appropriate at all? Is there effective monitoring of damage, and compensation? Are events appropriate if local people can't afford? Are impact payments being made to each Friends Group as agreed - is the info still on the Council website - Glynis will check (it is, but for events only)

Fields in Trust Covenanted Programme: Dave has written to Simon Farrow again. Apparently it is on someone's desk to do - possibly Chris Patterson - to get rest of sites added to be protected for all time.

Small grants programme (Lily): Should be coming soon, £250 (indiv) up to £1000 (for constituted group) Dave asked how much in entire pot?

Tennis courts / MUGAs - Football Foundation have approved the Council's application for new MUGAs / playzones - 3 definites & 2 maybes. Does council have discretion as how charged? Is main thing is for local groups & schools to have priority? Won't be locked? Loss of free slots? Report please from Dan Ball before next meeting. Glynis & Lily to check & come back.