

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum – General Meeting 6 Sept 2025

Present: Friends Groups reps: Dave Morris (Lordship Rec) – chaired; Deborah Cawkwell (Manchester Gardens, Paignton Park) - minuted, Cathy Meeus (Parkland Walk), Robert Howe (Brunswick Park), Pamela Harling (Tottenham Green, Tottenham Cemetery & Wolves Lane), Quentin Given (The Paddock), Thunder Raven-Stoker (Queen's Wood), Clare Parry (Downhills Pk), Joan Curtis (Lordship Rec), Laurie White (Noel Park FROGS), Vicci Midwinter (Coldfall Woods & Muswell Hill Playing Fields), Ceri Williams (Chestnuts Pk); + Anna Pole (TCV) **From 11am:** **Council reps:** Emma Betts (Parks Community Inclusion Officer), Annie Chalmers Mavor (Senior Events Officer). **FGs Apologies:** Joyce Rosser (Priory Common + Rectory Gdns), Kate Swade (Tower Gardens Park), Robyn Thomas (Alexandra Palace), Hesketh Benoit (Haringey Baseball Association), Chris Arnold (Stationers Park), Klaus Kuerner (Bruce Castle Pk); **LBH Apologies:** Simon Farrow (Head of Parks & Leisure), Chris Cavalier (Head of Operations);

DOCUMENTATION Dave distributed key relevant documents to delegates present

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: June 2025 minutes agreed as accurate

KEY FORUM ISSUES

•**Welcoming new local groups:** no new groups reported

•**Forum Diversity/Inclusion Working Group:** Deborah hopes to email contacts to set up meeting

•**Waste Collection:** Just before the summer started local groups were shocked when the council suddenly started expecting Friends Groups to pay for waste to be collected from our community events (if over 100 people). This is something that the Clean Team has always done as, of course, our events are not for profit but to promote and animate our local spaces. Likewise, many Friends Groups do litterpicking but have never charged the Council for doing that as we are helping out the staff. That's what partnership-working looks like! The Clean Team is understaffed – and of course we support them. As explained at our June meeting, Annie, from Events Team, had been told to implement that new policy, we had responded that this was unacceptable, and she said she'd relay our views back for reconsideration.

However, when groups began receiving letters asking them to pay, we called an emergency meeting of the Forum, which 4 groups attended to formulate a detailed response. We agreed to write a letter to Simon Farrow & to the Cabinet Members relevant to parks- outlining for discussion 10 constructive ways we and the Council could solve any waste collection issues without charging each other. This letter was sent, and the Forum today backed the content. Simon Farrow replied but didn't engage with any of our 10 proposals. Dave replied again on behalf of the Forum saying we need to discuss these. This meeting reaffirmed our unanimous support.

•**haringeyparks@lists.riseup.net** Following technical problems with our Forum's internal email communications list for group reps Dave set up a new email list and transferred all contacts. We reaffirmed that all group reps can use it to share news and key issues, but of course only about green spaces.

•**Haringey Council management changes:** Simon Farrow is no longer responsible for Leisure Centres, which hopefully means he now has more capacity to focus on parks issues and working with us as the Council's key partners in the maintenance, management and promotion of green spaces.

•**Haringey Local Nature Plan:** Annabel (Nature Conservation Officer) has produced a report for us, which we circulated. Consultation over the new draft Haringey Local Plan (guiding all development in the borough) will happen this autumn, which will include protection of green spaces, and incorporate the findings of the review of all Haringey's sites of importance for nature conservation (SINCs). Usually, the local plan will last 10 years: with public consultations at the draft stages, then go before a Planning Inspector for ratification/amendment. Developers are always eyeing up existing greenspace to build over, so always push for minimal policies protecting it. We agreed it will be vital that she and the Parks Service stand up for green spaces, make sure they are properly protected including that the Fields In Trust covenants are implemented for all designated sites as agreed by the Council. Annabel listed 'community priorities' issues, but Dave wrote back for the Forum and pointed out that proper protection for green spaces had not been included in her list of key priorities. We discussed various related matters.

We have been trying unsuccessfully to have a joint meeting with Annabel for at least the past 3 years. We agreed Clare will write to Annabel again to set up that meeting about what Annabel does, how does she allocate her time,

what are her and our priorities for nature conservation etc.

•**Local Nature Recovery Projects:** There are proposals for improving green space corridors and major sites.

•**Upgraded playgrounds:** Russell Park playground has had a £410k upgrade (from the Big Local Lottery Fund). Great launch event. 8 parks in Tottenham & Wood Green are also to have upgrades this winter, paid for by 'planning gain' from major development. 4 have £250k allocated, and 4 have £150k. We of course want all playgrounds across the borough to be kept in good repair and improved. We noted that each ward annually has a percentage allocation from any 'planning gain' from local development - but to cover a wide range of community infrastructure.

•**Green flag:** Council policy is to increase the number of Green Flags - but this year due to budget cuts the Council cut the number by half despite our strong objections. This means that standards and engagement suffers too. Regular Friends/ Council maintenance 'Spotlight walks' are part of the Green Flag process, but some non-green-flag spaces now have 'Stakeholder walks' - as we believe all sites should. Comms need improving as some groups only discovered the results of this year's green flag inspections via the Council's press release.

•**Safer Parks for Girls and Women:** Deborah reported that this excellent initiative, led by Lily Labonte, continues to be active, holding meetings, site visits etc. There is also a Young Women focus group.

•**Haringey Community Action Network:** We agreed to affiliate to HCAN a couple of years ago. We elected Dave as our rep. Its mainly for information-sharing and solidarity among around 30 various campaigning and advocacy groups. Dave sends the minutes of our meetings around their whatsapp group. HCAN held a special meeting about the Council's designation of 2027 as the 'Year of Culture / Rebel Borough'. HCAN is promoting the idea that it is community groups, campaigns and movements over the last decades who are the rebels standing up for community needs, rather than focus on the council. In fact many green spaces were originally set up due to community campaigns in the distant past, and have had to be protected by community campaigns in the last 25 years – eg White Hart Lane Rec, Bull Lane, Pinkham Way, Lordship Rec. Also the great positive work by Friends Groups needs recognition and publicity!

•**Haringey's Community Networks:** Haringey Community Collaborative has called a meeting to showcase the vital importance of grassroots community-run networks like ours. Dave will do the main introductory talk. Joan will make a presentation about Friends groups and our Forum. 10:30-13:00 26 Sept.

•**London Friends of Green Spaces Network:** Continue to hold regular meetings, interesting seminars, showcasing of Friends Groups' activities, and circulating monthly news bulletins etc.

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

BRIEF REPORTS FROM LOCAL GROUPS

Downhills Park: Annual Art in the Park event continues. Need a 'spotlight' repairs meeting. Got playground upgrade funding - work ongoing. Also, there's been good consultation re the MUGA – the footprint is to be adjusted. Will stay primarily basketball. Tennis courts well used. Lighting issue: consider around playground & tennis courts. Park needs maintenance.

Queens Wood: Nothing to complain about. Good engagement with Annabel (NCO) re Woodland management plan. Did bat walk. Preliminary results from the hedgehog survey – none found! Property on Muswell Hill Road with pool or jacuzzi & regular overflow into the wood. Damn built to try to stop water flowing downhill. Needs effective action to be taken. Upcoming: tree walk, plus moss & lichen in November. Canopy thinning required to help light reach the woodland floor.

Chestnuts Park: Lighting has been an issue. Used to be lighting toward play centre. Now load of contractors coming in. Mended broken lights that go nowhere. Got playground improvements funding - consultations have been a scramble, especially now Kristie has left the Council - what was written down & what was not? Currently playground needs features for kids over 8yrs old. Now not room for circle of swings (used by older girls) & the tower. Are swings promised elsewhere? Zip wire most popular thing is broken again - at last meeting was supposed to be fixed. Council officer Chris shaken on last walk about re the state of the park. New GLA green fund - Council is doing a mega bid. Chestnuts as a local group want to make a bid.

Parkland Walk: The fact that its no longer a green flag site means no 'spotlight' walk. Awaiting date for replacement stakeholder walkabout. Northern end of the Parkland Walk has safety issue about kids throwing stuff over the bridge parapets. Friends supporting the Council. possible use of CCTV, and loose stones could be bound together.

Encroachment by home-owners stealing land: Friends used to have regular meetings with the Council, but these desperately-needed meetings have not happened for 2 years. Oxford Road, bin cupboard built on Parkland Walk land. Friends worked alongside the council to address. Re-surfacing funding has now run out – urgent spot mending is not being done. With puddle season, people will avoid & go wide!! Speeding bikes continue to be a danger to older people, younger people. Pedestrians need to be prioritised via better signage. Project team say they have no money for this until maybe 2027.

Wolves Lane: Site involves a wide range of user groups, and is now letting out its buildings for hire. Plan a tomato festival.

Tottenham Cemetery: Managed by Dignity. Management Plan out of date for years and not updated. Contractors just told to keep it tidy. Friends very fed up with no plan and other issues not being dealt with - they are considering disbanding the group. Still struggling on at moment. Simon Farrow negotiated the contract for Dignity, so needs to force them to fulfil their obligations.

Coldfall Wood: Wildflower meadow - lot of input from TCV - just been cut (at right time) & cuttings will be removed in a week. Mindful drawing, sensory walk coming up + bird walk. Habitat management plan circulated to comment on. Problem with squirrels. Enormous concrete blocks to prevent vehicle access - travellers brought horse & moved blocks. Home-owner put up scaffolding in wood, Council reps have sorted this out. Friends have been planting in wood funded by Stronger Start (Tesco) - between 500 & 1500 bulbs

Brunswick Park: Very small group, going for a few years. Small but important pocket park. Has not been hugely maintained by council. Lots of ASB. Homeless sleeping under a maple tree. Had put up some chestnut paling, to protect against BBQs but paling used for BBQ. Has been reported to ward panel. Tiny playground. Some recent repairs. Need a replacement swing. Also issue re 'meadow trial' - worked hard to set up 3 years ago but not maintained. Trial is a failure. Friends rep dug up whole area last year, but not prepared to do it again. Problem with knowing who to contact. Zonal Officer?? If stuff done in the park, Friends are not told. Because of ASB, always lots litter, which gets mashed up with grass cutting. If there was better communication, then Friends could do a litterpick before then. CCTV - mugging, no responsibility. Now taken down. About 5 crimes committed, nothing done. Next year Friends plan community event. *Clarification: every single green space is allocated a Zonal Officer, but there has been turnover of staff and often their communications is poor.*

Lordship Rec: Friends got a green flag for their management of the Woodland. A few fires - fire brigade called in twice. 6 great community events at the Shell Theatre this summer - more than ever & by different communities. Friends and others coordinating their 20th annual Tottenham Flower & Produce Festival on Sept 13 – *Update: 1,000 attended, felt to be the best ever despite rain. Lottery grant funded 6 months worth of over a dozen pre and post festival workshops.* Moselle River volunteers regularly clear channel vegetation, coordinated by Haringey Water Squad. Misconnections still cause pollution and need enforcement by the Council. General maintenance in the Rec is deteriorating eg disintegrating paths, hedges not cut, benches, noticeboards etc. Council and Friends plan to apply for substantial Lottery 'legacy' funding - the Lottery put in £4m 15 years ago & may support a booster grant. Lots of volunteering sessions every month, plus a herb walk and a bat Walk. Liaising over the planned £250k playground revamp. £140k of major repairs been taking place at the hub – much needed, but caused £15k loss of income. Friends successfully opposed a threat for a massive commercial event taking over their main field for 8 days in 2026.

Manchester Gardens: regular monthly litter pick. Thorny planting at the back alongside the homes not yet in - committee disappointed. Good relationship with new manager at the adjacent St Mungos building - v responsive to anti-social behaviour issues. Plan to apply for Veolia Sustainability Fund for gardening group, possibly in partnership with HAGA alcohol support charity and St Mungos.

Paignton Park: Monthly litter pick. Tiny Forest growing, but water a problem. Earthwatch were keen for us to also have a Tiny Orchard, but water, number of volunteers a problem. Playground: delays apparently due to change in procurement system. Public selection (from 3 designs) & litter competition now likely to be October. Strimmed again!! (also last year) - some of the plants (lavender) in full bloom. Have worked beds & improved soil.

FROGS: not just the park, other areas. Huge CCTV mast in park. Is it monitoring? did have an incident during playground build. £75K of kit stolen. Got pipes in park. Tree inspection. Some fallen down in winter. Some are above footpaths. Please contact us before mowing what we've planted. Otherwise, can be demoralising. Long avenues (streets) with trees. Some growth / spurs. Volunteers will trim, but what do do. Buck passing.

Harmony Gardens: The Council's regeneration team doing major works on Broadwater Farm estate has put forward options for the future of the Broadwater Community Centre, 2 of which could threaten the Gardens – despite the incredible success and high public profile of this food growing project run by local volunteers. The Friends of

Harmony Gardens may need to launch a campaign to ensure the community space is fully protected. The Forum agreed to support.

Other A number of groups sent round additional updates..

COUNCIL RESPONSES TO THE REPORTS ABOVE – EMMA

- **Queens Wood:** Household flooding ingress issue being addressed. Annabel is aware re canopy trimming.
- **Chestnuts Park:** Council will be recruiting to replace people lost in Projects team. Emma B agreed to find out what stage that's at. The 8 playgrounds being upgraded - implementation is being led by Simone. Will pass on the concern raised about swings being lost.
- **Parkland Walk:** Stakeholder walks will pick up. Will raise the need to reinstate encroachment meetings.
- **Tottenham Cemetery:** Will pass on to Simon F the serious concerns and demoralisation re lack of management plan.
- **Brunswick Park:** Will seek to facilitate communication. Annie to pick up around play equipment. Emma to speak to Christophe who is looking after the CCTV.
- **Paignton Park:** The idea of the Earthwatch Tiny Forests is that they are low maintenance & fast growing, but concerns over (over-) strimming will be passed on.

THE CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS

Manage 2 bases: railway fields and the paddock. Both also have Friends groups A. The paddock is due to be extended to incorporate adjacent land - Weir / fish passes / tributaries of the Lea / Paths, bird hide. B. Railway fields: green flag. Upcoming: bat walk. Hot summer: issues with BBQs, cigarettes. Trees dropping limbs (seems to be a borough-wide issue). Small branches – they do themselves. Larger, they report via Love Clean Streets app. Increased ASB at the site. C. TCV do monthly Newsletter - people can sign up. TCV urged to send out to our email list.

OTHER REPORTS AND ISSUES

Friends Events - Waste Collection Charges: See above. We have made it clear that Friends groups should not be paying. We are key partners. We don't have any money. We don't charge the Council for litterpicking etc. Officers may have been pressed by Cabinet members because of budget constraints – but this is barmy, as the more the budgets are cut the more the parks service needs to support Friends groups activities! We await proper discussion.

Commercial events. The threat is growing of even greater commercialisation, greater size, duration of take over of public green space etc. Discussion.

Green flag awards: Very unhappy re numbers cut; it's a budget issue.

People Need Parks: Two pots available – Finsbury Park (because of the commercial events there) and the rest of the borough. £40k budget funded 24 projects across 17 parks - for 14 friends groups, 10 community groups. Now closed, except some left for Finsbury Park.

Haringey Local Plan draft: out for consultation this autumn. SINC's review will be incorporated into draft Local Plan. We asked Emma to inform Annabel that the final SINC review report needs to be sent to us, so that we can see what it says and ensure it gets properly incorporated. We also reminded Emma that we are still awaiting a joint meeting with Annabel, which of course could include Local Plan issues. *Update: No progress yet on these 2 things.*

Staffing update: Officers lost: Rachel (small green spaces volunteering officer), Kristie (parks development team), Hilary Bournas (parks project officer). Kristie's post will be recruited. Enforcement Officer post frozen. Recruitment in operations/grounds staff. Note: Problem with recent thefts of equipment stolen from depots, eg, mowing machines.

Byelaws: being worked on.

Young women's group: will be re-recruiting; would like to prioritise events.

Greenspace Accessibility work: Looking into dementia-friendly features - 5 key areas: signage, seating, surfaces, sense of place, greater connection (individual characteristics), socialising (having a way that people can first have

contact with the park). Because of limited capacity starting with Finsbury Park. Interpretation boards & graffiti. Other things to explore like audio. Accessibility: anti-social cycling is a problem. Tactile map.

Forum's Walking booklets Many of our very popular booklet are still available for distribution to the public – contact Friends of Lordship Rec to get some.