

Minutes of the AGM held at Woolwich Town Hall January 21st 2016

Present at the meeting:

Terry Powley Chair
Bee Twidale Secretary
Dave Stevenson. Treasurer
Carol Howcroft Fairy Hill
Laurie Baker Well Hall & Shootershill
John Webb Avery Hill & Well Hall
Janet & Robert Thompson. Horn Park.
Carole & Bob Thomas The Tarn
Bridget Imeson Eaglesfield
Stephen O'Conner Rockcliffe
Julia Grollman Sutcliffe

Apologies for absence:

Kathy Smith & Sonja O'Sullivan, Shrewsbury Park
Nick Day Plumstead CEG
Bob King Horn Park

Greenwich Parks & Open Spaces:

Kit Long

Guest Speaker:

Bridget Imeson: Associate Director of Public Health and Well-being, Royal Borough of Greenwich.
The value of Greenwich parks in creating health and well-being.

Welcome:

T.P. welcomed Bridget

Bridget started her talk with the explanation that her other "hat" was as chair of Eaglesfield Park.

Question/Answer session.

J.G Much of our park playground equipment needs an update; how good are the connections between departments in RBG e.g. health/parks/planning?

B.I. This still has a lot of scope to develop but a Health and Wellbeing Strategy is at present being formulated.

K.T. A public questionnaire is being circulated to understand who uses our parks.

J.W. The implications of poor quality food are far reaching e.g. MacDonald's sponsorship of the Olympic Games. Our leisure centres have poor quality food & drink on sale; do we need to have a "sugar tax" on Leisure Centres and hospitals?

B.I. Our obesity strategy needs to encompass a healthy food environment and our publicity needs to be an exemplar.

C.T. Walking is a vital part of the fitness strategy yet the path maintenance in our park has fallen by the wayside. We need to make it easier to walk in our parks.

B.I. Public Health and Wellbeing needs to provide RBG with evidence to enable them to make relevant legislation.

S. O'C. Greenwich borough has most green space but high obesity! Rockcliffe has scope for "Grow your own".

B.I. Central Community Growers and the council's core strategy try to cover this with walking, cycling and active play.

T.P. How do we get our councillors to "hold the line" (and preserve our open spaces) RBG seem only too keen to give away Metropolitan Open land.

B.I. It's all about strength of community voice! Political leadership is very important; e.g. the mayor of New York has reduced portion size in cafés and restaurants. In Greenwich the Public Health team cannot change this; it is up to individuals. We want to improve over-all health by targeting the poorest health population.

B.T. The Olympic Legacy fitness equipment installed in many of our parks is a point in question. They remain un-used except for Fairy Hill, which has a local fitness group using it. In general equipment in parks, M.U.G.A's etc seem to be male biased. One exception being Kidbrooke Green's netball pitch.

B.I. There is a big fall out in female take up.

D.S. Netball England use Kidbrooke Green's netball facilities.

Chair's Report:

T.P. reported that the forum met 5 times during the course of the year, including the AGM in January. There are usually 12-16 members of different groups present, a consistently encouraging level of attendance.

We welcomed three new groups; The Friends of the Pets' Cemetery, Friends of Queenscroft and Friends of Rockliffe gardens.

Cllr Jackie Smith, the cabinet lead for Community Safety and Environment; which includes a brief for Parks and Open Spaces, attended the meeting in September. She outlined the hope that Greenwich would be able, despite the cuts, to keep the parks and open spaces up to standard. There was certainly no wish to go down the same route as neighbouring boroughs and "fly them off"!

She concluded by expressing her appreciation of the efforts of all the friends' groups- without them, she reiterated, our public parks would be much poorer places.

Parksfest completed its 7th year of operation. Ten friends groups put on 16 events. Shrewsbury and Eaglesfield Parks returned as participants, though Plumstead Common was unable to be involved due to Nick Day's absence.

The events were all successful, though the final event of the festival had to be cancelled because of the persistent rain, the first time this has happened!

The Forum has continued to be a valued place where member groups can share their plans and experiences with each other, and raise issues and concerns with council officers. The regular updates as part of the agenda allow a common history to be forged and enable solutions to be sought in close dialogue with council officers; when there are problems in the parks or threats to our open spaces.

This year 2016, sees the 10th anniversary of the formation of Friends of Parks Groups in the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

Treasurer's report:

D.S.

Parks fest remains the only source of income for the Forum; via the management fee. This enables the Forum to award up to 4 grants of £1000 per year for Forum member group's projects.

This year a grant was awarded to Maryon Park for their community garden and fencing.

Election of Officers:

Kathy Smith has stood down as vice chair. Terry Powley thanked her for her years of service.

We'll miss you Kathy!

Stephen O'Conner was proposed by B.T. seconded by J.T; S.C. was duly elected vice chair 2016.

There were no nominations for changes to the other elected officers.

The current chair, treasurer and secretary agreed to stand for a further year.

Parks Fest co-ordinator: T.P. volunteered to continue.

C.T. proposed a vote of thanks to the Forum committee.

Immediate issues for discussion.

Parks Fest. T.P. reminded us that applications need to be in earlier this year. (Forms have already been sent out.) This year's budget is reduced

B.T. suggested that instead of a final Fest event showcasing the work of individual groups; we consider using the "Great get Together" as a "showcase" venue as it reaches a wider audience.

K.L. to investigate.

New Parks Staff Structure:

C.T. enquired whether the rumours about voluntary redundancy for senior parks staff would be wide-sweeping?

K.L. There would be 180 in total across all areas of RBG; this includes 7 officers from Parks and Open Spaces.

J.W. suggested a letter of thanks to our parks officers. **T.P. to enquire whether a Forum leaving function would be appropriate.**

Any Other Business:

Nothing raised.

Date of next meeting: March 17th, 7.30 at Woolwich Town Hall.
R.G. or K.L. to book??