

FRIENDS OF VAUXHALL PARK



**Ashmole Tenants' Hall, 2 Meadow Road
Saturday 16th October 2010, 10.30am**

Apologies: Cllr Ishbel Brown, Polly Freeman, Lee Hills, Ivan McCracken and Michael Penny

MINUTES

1. Minutes of last meeting

All agreed action points for last meeting.

Summer Fair 2010 Review Event broke even. First year, that adopted new business model - did not seek sponsorship but rather focussed on raising funds through the events on offer. Polly Freeman and Seth Taylor thanked for their organisation. Contributions from individual stall holders also acknowledged with gratitude including:

Plants – Susan Smith and Meridy McCracken

Cakes – Oval Montessori Nursery mothers

Children's Area – Louise Norwood who has sponsored this for a number of years

Bric a Brac – Ross Davies

2. Octave Tower and Other Developments

Helen Monger reported that The Friends of Vauxhall Park had raised a number of objections to the Octave Tower proposals at a number of Lambeth Planning Meetings. The Octave Tower had been turned down by Lambeth Council following representations by a number of local bodies but the developer had appealed the decision which led to a full Planning Inquiry during the summer. Prior to the Planning Inquiry the Friends of Vauxhall Park commissioned a special report at a cost of just over £4,000 with the help of a £300 contribution from the Vauxhall Society (which is most gratefully acknowledged). It demonstrated that the 42 storey tower would cast a shadow on the park on summer's evenings thus diminishing the amenity value of this open space in an area of high density population and suffering relative deprivation. The Friends of Vauxhall Park, despite being volunteers, were able to attend every day of the 3 week planning inquiry hearing held at Lambeth Council in July during the school summer holidays. In particular, Polly Freeman was thanked for her contribution. The planning inspector was now deliberating on the evidence presented at the hearing and would report his decision agreed by the Secretary of State by 14th February 2010.

Ross Davies from the Vauxhall Society was concerned that more should be done to pursue local objections further and urged everyone to write to Kate Hoey MP, the local Councillors and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles MP.

Helen Monger also reported that she and Polly Freeman had met with the architect involved in the development of the Kylun Towers on the Vauxhall Island site prior to them submitting a planning application. Although the architect had adapted some of the proposals and agreed to direct some of the likely S.106 funding to Vauxhall Park, the height of the designs submitted to Lambeth Council for planning consent remained a concern. As a result Helen Monger had written on behalf of the Friends of Vauxhall Park to object to this latest proposal on the basis that it too would cast some shadow on the park on summer evenings though far less than the proposals for the Octave Tower. Were the Octave Tower to be given planning consent then the basis for the Friends of Vauxhall Park objections for Kylun Towers would no longer be relevant.

A number of other planning applications were likely to be forthcoming given the new Vauxhall Nine Elms Battersea Development Opportunity Area proposals now forming the basis of planning policy in the area. The Friends of Vauxhall Park would continue to represent its members on individual applications as they arise, if they affect the park. Additionally, members were asked to alert the Friends where any new proposals are thought to affect the park. It was noted that to date there had been poor public consultation undertaken by developers - despite an offer by the Friends of Vauxhall Park to host a display at the summer fair this had been declined by Kylun Towers. The offer remains open to others thinking of developing substantial properties in the area as an option for genuine consultation with the local population.

3. Updates

Lambeth Parks Department changes and Walkabout

Teresa Clay reported that she and Helen Monger had undertaken a walkabout the week before with Michael Penney, our new Parks Officer to review progress on a number of areas in the park. Teresa Clay also recorded on behalf of the Friends of Vauxhall Park her thanks to Lee Hills who had been our Parks Officer.

Lambeth Council, like all Local Authorities is facing substantial cuts and already has a recruitment freeze. The expectation is that up to 400 jobs could go this year. Lambeth Council were also re-negotiating a number of their contracts to try and save money – this includes one with Veolia who are responsible for a lot of the maintenance work in Vauxhall Park. It is clear that in future, it will be harder for Lambeth Council to implement changes in our Park and that the Friends will need to consider funding some of the works which had previously been covered by the Council. The Friends of Vauxhall Park noted that keeping our 2 part-time gardeners George and Richard was an absolute priority - as yet there has been no indication of any change.

The points raised at the last walkabout on 8 October 2010(?) were:

- Gates on corner of South Lambeth Road and Fentiman Road had been damaged by a car accident in the summer. We reviewed brick samples, but asked for a better match – the gates are the original ones that remain for the park. Ivan McCracken is leading on this restoration work on behalf of the Friends of Vauxhall Park.
- Pergola – Started last spring and yet to be completed. This was flagged up as something the Friends hoped could be finished soon along with planting new rose bushes where they had become too old and no longer flowered.
- Moving gate for the One O'Clock Club forward to a more open area to improve security.
- Minor improvements to the beds in front of the lavender garden - tidying up their shape. Ideally would also plant a couple of cherry trees (one as a replacement for a

lost tree) to enable a long-term planned succession for a cherry tree walk along the path. Following advice from James Fraser at an earlier meeting, the Friends asked for a winter flowering cherry – Prunus Subhirtella 'autumnalis'.

- Mending or replacing the lights on the One O'clock Club veranda which had been a request from the Friends for over 2 years.
- Dog Area – would be moved following a rise in complaints from a variety of different sources. The plan was to re-use fencing no longer needed at Kennington Park and lay out an area adjacent to South Lambeth Road, thus providing a bigger flatter area for dog walkers whilst moving it away from the children's play area and the flats that had objected to barking noises. The remaining area might be used as a community orchard.
- Fountain – the Friends were pleased with the refurbishment they had funded during the period in which all Fountains were switched off in Lambeth to save funding. The Fountain had now been switched on for some time and was running well.
- Trees – The Friends of Vauxhall Park have asked for a replacement for several dead trees and a stolen mulberry tree.

Green Flag

The Council had been successful in securing an award of a Green Flag for Vauxhall Park this year. The flag would be raised at the Easter Egg Hunt to show that Vauxhall Park still met a standard of excellence for open spaces. Unfortunately, the award no longer guaranteed any funding and the scheme is under review for future years.

Café

Teresa Clay was delighted to announce that the Café had re-opened following the sad death of Henri Laghi suddenly last November. Teresa Clay welcomed Ann Guida the new café tenant to the meeting. Ann Guida explained that they were working hard to meet local residents expectations – at present they were open 7 days a week but would in time review the best opening hours for business. She also said that the café was willing to do outside catering for local offices and to host events.

Benches and Trees

Helen Monger was pleased to report that two benches had been installed and two more were due to be ordered soon. However, following changes at Lambeth Council, she noted that in future benches would need to be paid prior to delivery, whereas previously she had collected money from the donor on receipt of the bench and the Friends then reimbursed Lambeth Council following submission an invoice. The Friends of Vauxhall Park were still awaiting invoices for a number of benches from Lambeth Council and this change would represent a change in the cashflow.

A number of people had pointed out that one bench was heavily decorated which was not felt to be in keeping with the purposes of a public park. Helen Monger agreed that this would need to be reviewed but that the bench was in memory of a recent and tragic death of a young person so hoped that in time the decoration could be removed discreetly. The Friends of Vauxhall Park, also felt that now was the time to also promote planting and sponsoring trees and hoped to trial labels with donors messages pinned to the tree.

Memorial for Henri Laghi

Teresa Clay had been contacted again by Mr Scott to ask if a plaque could be put up in memory of Henri Laghi on the café with a donation from the Friends of Vauxhall Park. As in March the Committee agreed that although all were saddened by Henri's sudden death, a contribution to the memorial of an individual not directly involved with the work of the

Friends was not an appropriate use of the Friends of Vauxhall Park funds. It was explained that the Friends of Vauxhall Park had been set up with the purpose of improving the park, as set out in its constitution and this was the basis upon which membership, donations and sponsorship had been collected and therefore could not be spent on alternative proposals. In addition, it was noted, that with the exception of one plaque to a local vicar placed (prior to the creation of Friends of Vauxhall Park) in the 1980's on the MUGA wall there were no other memorial plaques and that it was not currently council policy to encourage memorial plaques in their public parks. The Friends of Vauxhall Park, would welcome the family donating a bench or a tree should they wish to commemorate Henri in the Park and would be willing to offer a small discount of about £30 if the need arose.

4. Future events and date of next meeting

For this year, unless a volunteer was found it was unlikely that there would be a bulb planting. Last year's had been attended by some 20 people in very bad weather, and had been a success with the planting of 1,000 bluebell and snowdrops near the Lawn Lane and South Lambeth Road entrance. Some had shown up, but it was hoped that this year there would be more evidence of the work in Spring. However, all other events for the forthcoming year are planned. Dates for 2011 were agreed as follows:

Saturday 29th January 10.30 am AGM - Ashmole Tenants Hall (NB: since the meeting, the date for this has been moved to Saturday 22nd January 2011).

Sunday 30th January Members Drinks – venue tbc

Wednesday 30th March 8pm Open Meeting – venue tbc

Saturday 9th April - Easter Egg Hunt

Summer fair – date to be confirmed at the AGM

Open Meeting in Autumn – date to be confirmed at the AGM

5. Any Other Business

Gates – several residents were concerned that recently there had been an increase in the occasions that the Gates of the park had been left unlocked over night. The committee agreed to monitor the situation, but suspected that this was an oversight.

Membership – All were reminded that renewals for the forthcoming year were now due. The rates have remained the same since the inception of the Friends in 2000. This was felt to be optimal, to encourage as many local people as possible to join in and that raising the rates was undesirable at this stage. It was noted that many members are generous with additional donations which have enabled the Friends to undertake all the activities to date.

Website – Martin Stanley was acknowledged for all his work to improve and update the Friends of Vauxhall website further.

Helen Monger
Secretary
31 October 2010