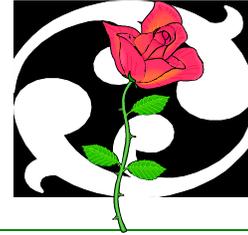


FRIENDS OF VAUXHALL PARK



Ashmole Tenants' Hall, Meadow Road, SW8
Saturday 1st October at 10.30am

Apologies: Ross Davies (Chair Vauxhall Society), Cllr Jane Edbrooke, Polly Freeman (Membership Secretary), Sophie Kotch (Treasurer), Ivan McCracken, Louise Norwood, Mickey Penney (Parks Officer), Seth Taylor

In attendance
Cllr Ishbel Brown
Cllr Jack Hopkins

1. Minutes of last meeting and any matters arising

Minutes of the last meeting were circulated and agreed.

2. Chair's Report Constitution

The Chair reported that with the council's current budgetary constraints it was even more important for the Friends of Vauxhall Park to secure funding for the benefit of the park. Applications to grant-giving organisations and funding through planning conditions required evidence that the Friends were a properly constituted and run organisation, and a light touch charitable status would bring tax advantages. The original constitution which had served the Friends very well over the last decade needed to be reviewed. The Chair hoped that a member with a legal background could volunteer to review the existing constitution and set out options for revision in time for the AGM in January. Michael Keane representing the Oval Partnership said that charity registration might not be worthwhile for an organisation with an annual income of less than £5,000. The Oval Partnership had been registered, but had decided to deregister because the paperwork and volunteer time to remain registered outweighed the benefits, as their income frequently fell below £5,000. Michael Keane offered to help but felt that someone legal qualified should take the lead.

Action: Any volunteers willing to lead on this work should contact the Chair, Teresa Clay.

3. Lambeth Parks Budgets and Cooperative Council

The Chair reported that as of April 2011 the Parks Department had faced cuts of over 10% in their staffing. The Rangers had gone and £650,000 of savings had been made in the contract with Veolia (the agency that works on behalf of the council to maintain parks) resulting in service level reductions. Vauxhall Park had lost its two gardeners. In addition to cuts in maintenance, there would be only minimal capital funds available .

The Parks Forum (Friends' groups across Lambeth) had repeatedly sought information on the budget, re-tendering of the Veolia contract, and proposed restructuring of the Parks Department and asked who would be liaising with Friends' groups in future to no avail. The Chair had worked closely with the Chair and Secretary of the Forum and met the Cabinet Member for Parks on these issues. A meeting of the Forum had been scheduled for 24th October – the 'Parks Summit' – and it was hoped that some progress would be made at that meeting. .

4. Vauxhall Park maintenance

The Chair was pleased to report three significant achievements this year:

- Securing a green flag for a fourth year – a testament to the quality of Vauxhall Park as a public amenity.
- Restoration of the park gates on the corner of Fentiman Road and South Lambeth Road - after a car accident last year severely damaged them. The work had encountered problems and the final account was yet to be settled, but FOVP was grateful to Mickey Penney for making the necessary arrangements. It was noted that the Council's procurement system had made the process unnecessarily complex for a relatively small job.
- Ensuring the Fountain was turned back on in May just in time for the Green flag judging – although it would again be turned off in November to avoid burst pipes over winter. The Friends needed to try and secure funding and a contract for the fountain to be repaired for next year, as the base was deteriorating fast and it was doubtful whether it would be usable after next winter. Without capital funding available, this was the kind of repair that would need to be given support by the Friends – but still required the Council's input to ensure an appropriate contractor was secured for the work.

Given the financial challenges faced by Lambeth members were pleased that Vauxhall Park had remained well used. However, members commented on increasing maintenance needs that were no longer being addressed, including:

- Play equipment which needed general upgrading and repairs - a swing had been out of action for two weeks at the time of the meeting despite the Secretary reporting this immediately to the Parks Department. It was noted that volunteer repairs would need the Council's involvement to ensure health and safety requirements were met, and that there had not been no significant investment in the playground for nearly a decade (with the addition of only one piece of equipment in that time).
- Weeding – particularly around the Lavender Garden
- Tree care and hedge trimming.

Members were keen to get involved in this work. The Chair welcomed volunteers but noted that all work should be carried out in cooperation with parks officers rather than attempting 'guerrilla gardening'.

5. VNEB and planning proposals

Helen Monger (Secretary) reminded everyone that Vauxhall Park was part of the London Mayor's Vauxhall Nine Elms Battersea Development Opportunity Area (VNEB) which identifies Vauxhall as an area of high density high rise development. As a result, Vauxhall Park and the Friends would need to respond to many developments. The Secretary reiterated the previously agreed principle that FOVP would only comment on projects which directly impinged upon the park and as a result would not be commenting on the Sainsbury's proposals. FOVP had already scored a success with the rejection of the scheme on Bondway following a public inquiry last year. Led by Polly Freeman (Membership Secretary), FOVP had convinced the Inspector that the scheme would have had an unacceptable impact on Vauxhall Park. At present there were three more schemes that FOVP were concerned about:

Kylun Towers

These were two towers (41 storeys and 32 storeys) proposed for the traffic island at Vauxhall Cross. Lambeth Planning Committee had deferred a decision until Transport for London and the developers could agree on how to achieve a safe crossing over Wandsworth Road to the riverside. Polly Freeman and Helen Monger had argued on behalf of FOVP at the Planning Committee that any developer contribution (s106 funding) should be allocated to Vauxhall Park rather than to Spring Gardens, as proposed, because the impact would be considerably greater on Vauxhall Park. Any funding should be used to upgrade the play facilities for both future residents in the planned towers and existing users. Helen Monger took part in the Planning Committee's site visit, to demonstrate that the play area in Vauxhall Park was substantially easier to reach from the proposed site than the one in Spring

Gardens. The Secretary emphasised that FOVP opposed the development in principle as it was too tall and would overshadow the park in the summer, but it was important to make the case for s106 funding, If the development were approved funding s.106 funding would not become available until building started, which could be many years from now. FOVP would be making a representation in support of the Council to the Planning Inquiry.

South Lambeth Road – Downing development

The proposal is for a 32 storey building on the currently vacant site on the corner of Parry Street and South Lambeth Road, to provide student accommodation and also as a benefit to the local community a swimming pool. The proposed height is just a little taller than Keybridge House (the BT building). The Secretary had commented on the proposals to the developer, encouraging the provision of a swimming pool but raising concerns about the proposed height so close to the park and the proposed metal and glass finish. A 'living wall' (as seen on the Vauxhall end of the Oval Cricket Ground) and timber would lessen the visual impact on the park. The Secretary had also asked the developers for a significant contribution in the form of a diminishing endowment to help with maintenance of the park beds nearest to the development. The developer had not responded positively but FOVP (Helen Monger and Polly Freeman) awaited the final proposals to the Planning Committee.

Market Towers

The proposal was to replace One Nine Elms with an even taller tower, which was currently being designed. Helen Monger and Polly Freeman had arranged to meet the architects and the PR agents for this scheme shortly and would report back.

Members were concerned at the height and density of all the buildings currently being proposed. Members also asked about the Northern Line Extension proposals and the decision to focus development on Vauxhall – the Secretary explained that the overall plans had been agreed by the current Mayor of London and his predecessor. Helen Monger and Polly Freeman had attended on behalf of FOVP two local consultations in January and May organized by Lambeth Council. The overall plan included the concept of a 'linear park' but the extent and detail remained unclear. FOVP were firmly putting the case that Vauxhall Park should be the gateway into the linear park through Miles Street.

Councillors Brown and Hopkins said that they had worked hard to ensure that residents' views on the developments were represented, and that they would be happy to take up the concerns expressed. Proposals for a Business Improvement District (BID) could lead to funding to support parks from local businesses in the interests of their employees.

The Chair thanked Polly Freeman and Helen Monger for all their diligence and hard work representing FOVP on planning issues.

6. 100 Club Flower Beds and Volunteer gardening

The Secretary said that thanks to Polly Freeman (Membership Secretary), FOVP had secured their first corporate member – CLS Holdings – a local company which had offered sponsorship. Mickey Penney, the Parks Officer had costed planting for each of the main flower beds in the centre of the Park. About £10,000 a year was needed to ensure changing displays over each of the seasons for the four main beds (the model village area and in front of the one O'Clock Club and two beds adjacent to the rose arbour). Although CLS Holdings have not agreed to sponsor the flower beds, Polly Freeman had proposed a '100 Club' in which 100 members would contribute to the annual cost. Members at the meeting were very enthusiastic and several offered to contribute immediately. Acknowledgement would be made via the website.

Action: Members willing to join the 100 Club to contact Polly Freeman or other member of the Committee.

The Chair said that in the new financial context FOVP would need to be more active in volunteering in the Park. She explained that the existing committee members were already

fully committed and that there was need for a volunteer to step forward and coordinate work parties over the year. FOVP had been approached by two people, Susan Williams from BTCV who could provide a group of volunteers for a specific project. Additionally, Ruth Morgan a gardener by training had volunteered to assist with maintenance of the Lavender Garden. It was noted that the lavender had some commercial value. Members agreed that volunteers could collect the Lavender, provided that a proportion of the profits were donated to deliver improvements to the Park.

Action: Members willing to carry out gardening and maintenance in the Park, or to act as a volunteer coordinator, to contact the Membership Secretary, Polly Freeman

7. New Orchard

The Secretary said that she had applied unsuccessfully to the Capital Community Fund seeking £5,000 to put in a Community Orchard with associated picnic benches and signboard in the area previously occupied by the dog compound. However an application to the London Orchard Foundation had been successful and as a result a smaller scheme, with a contribution of £500 from FOVP would progress over the next year. Everyone was invited to attend a meeting on 5th October at 10 am in Vauxhall Park to discuss the types of trees planned for the orchard. Volunteers were sought to help coordinate managing the orchard, particularly weekly watering of all the trees in the first year. The plan was for a mixed set of fruit and nut trees concentrating on length of fruiting period rather than high yields. The fruit were intended for use by the homeless based at Graham House, in accordance with the FOVP masterplan, though it was acknowledged that park users were likely to pick the occasional fruit.

Action: Any volunteers willing to lead on this work should contact Helen Monger (the Secretary) as a course on orchard management would be held in November.

8. Report on summer fair 2011

The Chair reported that yet again the FOVP had run a very successful summer fair, well attended by local people with plenty of new attractions. The Chair thanked the many substantial contributions made including:

- Louise Norwood and the Oval Montessori Nursery based in the park – for the organisation and running of the Children's Area and cake stall donations;
- Polly and Quentin Freeman for sponsoring the Punch and Judy shows
- Ivan and Meridy McCracken for sponsoring the Oompah Band
- Sophie Kotch for sorting out the floats and preparing detailed financial accounts
- Seth Taylor, Polly Freeman, Jill Gregson and Helen Monger for dealing with everything on the day and making sure it was a safe, friendly and enjoyable event for everyone.
- All the volunteers who helped on the day – including those who manned the Plant and Bric a Brac Stall and CLS Holdings for helping, especially with the face painting.

The cost to FOVP was around £3,400 including provision of toilets, donkey rides, go karting, football coaching, bouncy slide and other attractions. This year, although the day itself was busy, income was around £3,000, so that the event ran at a small loss. The Chair said that FOVP have always taken the view that it is worth risking a loss to ensure that such a popular community event goes ahead, though the aim was always to at least break even.

9. Schedule of Events for 2012

Members agreed the following dates:

- Next meeting – AGM – Saturday 21 January, 10.30 am, Ashmole Tenants' Hall,
- Members' Party – Sunday 22 January
- Members spring meeting – Wednesday 14 March 2011, 8pm venue tbc
- Easter Egg Hunt – Saturday 31 March
- Summer Fair – Saturday 23 June 2-5pm

- Members autumn meeting – Saturday 6th October 2011, 10.30am, Ashmole Tenants' Hall

10. Any other business

- Members were reminded that renewal of annual subscriptions was due in November. Members agreed that FOVP should maintain its membership rates (at rates set some years ago) to encourage high membership, which gave credibility in representing users of the park.
- Christina Burnett explained that she had been working with design students to develop their ideas on what Vauxhall should look like in the future. She also encouraged members to support the Digital Bazaars once a month at South Lambeth Library and the library itself which was under threat from cuts.
- Lambeth Archives Service had organized a guided walk around Vauxhall Park on 24th October meeting at 11 am outside the Almshouses on Fentiman Road (part of a series on local parks).
- Michael Cook kindly thanked the Committee for all their work.
- The Chair said that the Friends would welcome new volunteers to join the Committee and help with arranging events and the many other activities.
- The Chair thanked those who had already volunteered, including Martin Stanley on the website.

Helen Monger
Secretary
15th October 2011