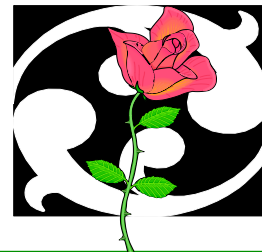


FRIENDS OF VAUXHALL PARK



Ashmole Tenants Association, 2 Meadow Road, London SW8
Saturday 21st January 2012 at 10.30am

Apologies: Ivan McCracken, Cllr Jack Hopkins

In attendance

Cllr Ishbel Brown

Ross Davies, The Vauxhall Society

1. Minutes of last meeting and any matters arising

All agreed minutes of last meeting.

2. Membership Secretary's Report

Polly Freeman, the membership Secretary, reminded those present that it was time to renew membership. At present there were 51 members for the current year (down on this time last year when there were 89 members). However, it was agreed that the group wished to stick to the existing levels in order to enable more members to join as the outturn last year had proved successful with £361 raised through subscriptions and £612 through donations.

Polly Freeman, confirmed that she had circulated two newsletters – one in the spring and one in the autumn and that this would continue for this year. She was also going to do a recruitment drive, leafleting local houses and circulating emails via local residents' associations to boost the numbers, something that had not happened last year due to the many other activities of the Friends. She reminded people of other fundraising activities including the new postcards that she had for sale and that the 100 club was still to be planned but needed someone to help coordinate. The Chair thanked Polly Freeman not only for her activities as Membership Secretary this year but also for all the other duties including taking the lead on planning issues.

3. Treasurer's Report

Sophie Kotch, the Treasurer, reported on the various transactions throughout the year. She explained that the Friends had received significant donations this year which helped to offset the cost of some events. As well as donations, the Friends had received a one-off contribution from Helen Monger of £265 through a fundraiser and a variety of payments towards benches, though the cost of the benches exceeded the contribution. This was in part due to the cost of benches increasing and the Friends accepting that they would make a small contribution rather than seek the extra from the donor.

Sophie Kotch explained that this year, for the first time, the Friends had made a small loss on the summer fair. This was due to a combination of certain critical items costing a little more than the previous year. However, the Friends had adopted a different business model, seeking less local sponsorship and instead hoping to secure more from the fair goers to cover the costs of the attractions. Each year was a gamble but it was felt to be worthwhile as it was an important community activity which helped engender support for the park from local people thus reducing vandalism and other antisocial activity. The Chair added a thank you to all the volunteers who helped on the day including the Oval Montessori Nursery for the whole of the profit from their cake stall - £225 in total, the Covent Garden Market for their contribution to the plant stall which made £361 and the Vauxhall Society for their donation of £112 as half of their profit from their stall. The Chair also thanked Sophie for her work as

Treasurer over the year and in particular the detailed accounting and sorting out of floats for the summer fair.

4. Chair's Report

Constitution

Teresa Clay, the Chair, explained that, as had been reported in previous minutes, our constitution had been in place since 1999 and was now in need of revision to take advantage of charitable status, and the desire of the Friends to secure more grants. She had been advised that charitable status was available without the burden of registration for groups with an annual income of under £5,000. There was a model constitution for small charities provided by the Charities Commission. The advantage of adopting a revised constitution including a recognised charitable purpose would be that that FOVP could apply for an HMRC charity number. This would enable FOVP to receive Gift Aid on membership and other donations as well as reclaim VAT on goods and services procured directly. At present procurement was carried out via the Parks Department, but this might be less frequent in the future.

Parks Working Group and Vauxhall Park pilot

The Chair reported that Lambeth Parks Forum had held a Parks Summit in November which had agreed to set up a small Parks Working Group of which the Chair was a member. The working group was parallel to the Library Commission, but lower key. The main aim of the Parks Forum was to use the Working Group to provide a voice for Friends Groups on restructuring of the Parks Department, and development of the new contract (currently held by Veolia and due to be re-let in 2014). It was keen to ensure that post-restructuring (due to complete in April) Parks Officers' job descriptions would include a specific requirement to work with volunteer groups. The Working Group had established that the Veolia contract was worth approximately £2.3m, while Lambeth Parks department spent approximately £800,000 on premises and £500,000 on their staff.

The Working Group had agreed that Alistair Johnstone from the Parks Department would work with FOVP on a pilot study of respecifying the Veolia contract as it applied to Vauxhall Park. He had provided a number of documents on the current contract but without any costs associated. The Chair explained that the Friends needed a volunteer to work with her on the specification and to agree scope and standards. Seth Taylor volunteered to take this on. Polly Freeman also recommended that we needed to carry out a new consultation exercise as it was some time since the last one had happened to see what park users wanted. Members agreed that this would be a good idea.

The Chair went on to explain that as part of reviewing the work, there was also a need to reconsider the processes Lambeth adopts to procure minor works. At the moment anything over £500 needed 3 tenders which was costly for everybody and time-consuming. The Parks Forum aimed to raise this threshold to over £2,000 but this would need to be agreed by councillors. .

5. Election of Officers

Chair, Teresa Clay; Membership Secretary, Polly Freeman; and Treasurer, Sophie Kotch were all re-elected. Helen Monger, stepping down as Secretary was thanked by the Committee for her work and given a photograph canvas of the Park. No-one volunteered to take on the position. Ros Hallifax kindly agreed to take minutes at the next meeting. Those present were asked to consider volunteering for the post of Secretary at the earliest opportunity.

6. Scheduled Events and Maintenance Issues

Orchard Planting

Helen Monger reminded everyone that next weekend the Friends needed volunteers on Saturday 28 January between 10am and 1pm to help plant fruit trees. She asked for spades and wheelbarrows to be brought by volunteers. Jill Gregson offered to provide a tea urn.

Maintenance

Helen Monger said that a number of problems had been flagged up through walkabouts with our Parks Officer and members raised further problems. These include:

- Fountain base in need of urgent repairs
- New play equipment – much of it very old and last piece of new equipment now about 10 years old.
- Fence at Lawn Lane damaged.
- Iron pergola – looks Victorian but actually 1980s – situated in children's area, very damaged and corroding quickly. Planting around the pergola sporadic – would benefit from more planting.
- Moss on tennis courts and playground – Parks Department has already arranged for some work but need to be vigilant.
- Golden Jubilee bench in need of repainting as subject to significant graffiti.
- Lavender garden – used by drunks and those coming out of clubs in the morning resulting in some antisocial behaviour.

7. Planning Matters

Business Improvement District (BID)

Ross Davies presented information about the proposed Vauxhall Business Improvement District. Businesses in the area with a turnover of more than £20,000 were being contacted to agree a voluntary levy to help fund activities in the area which will improve the commercial viability of Vauxhall. The Chair thanked Ross Davies for ensuring that Vauxhall Park was included in the map relating to the proposed Vauxhall Improvement District. Ross Davies suggested that the Friends put forward ideas that the BID could fund to help the park.

30-60 South Lambeth Road

Helen Monger said that on behalf of the Friends she had commented on the likely overshadowing of the park in summer afternoons, the overcrowding of the park (550 student units are proposed). The Planning Inspector for the Bondway Public Inquiry had supported the view that the Park would be under pressure with too much further development at close proximity. The Friends acknowledged the desirability of the swimming pool but were sceptical about s.106 contributions to mitigate the likely impact given that the Vauxhall Nine Elms Battersea Development Opportunity Area (VNEB) would prioritise expenditure on the Northern Line Extension. All members present supported the line the Friends of Vauxhall Park had taken so far and were concerned that the high rise development should be constrained to other side of the railway tracks to protect light. Brian Vos, a local resident, also spoke about the unknown impacts of a group of high rise buildings on wind and tunnelling. At present the Wind Assessment leaves out peak wind speeds. Recently, trees in the park had lost a number of substantial branches and he recommended that a record/diary could be kept to see what impacts were likely to be felt.

Kylun Towers

It was noted that Kylun Towers, had now gone to planning inquiry for non-determination. Ross Davies informed the meeting that it was scheduled for 6 March 2012.

8. Any other business

Asset Transfer

Helen Monger said that as part of the work towards a cooperative council, libraries were looking into the possibility of asset transfer to community groups to run libraries. This was something that the Friends might want to consider – in particular, some consideration might want to be given to linking Vauxhall Park more closely with Tate South Lambeth Library.

Website

Helen Monger explained that the website had not been updated as promptly as normal as Martin Stanley had been away, but now that he had returned the website would be brought back up to date. The Friends thanked Martin for his work.

One O'Clock Club

Helen Monger said that the Friends website had received an email from the providers of the One O'Clock Club consulting people on new arrangements for running this service and asking for a representative to discuss. Jill Gregson was already involved and would keep Friends of Vauxhall Park informed as required.

Helen Monger
Secretary
28 February 2012