

# FRIENDS OF VAUXHALL PARK



**Ashmole Tenants Association, 2 Meadow Road, London SW8  
Saturday 19th January 2013 at 10.30am**

**Apologies:** Cllr Ishbel Brown, Christina Burnett, Laura Cook and Susan Smith

**Acting Secretary:** Helen Monger

## **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. There were 113 members for the current year who had contributed £960.52 in donations over and above their membership fee.

Polly Freeman confirmed that she was looking at ways of introducing a direct debit system for paying for membership to reduce the administrative burden and to make it easier to claim gift aid in the future. 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 reported on the various transactions throughout the year and submitted the audited accounts. She explained that the Friends had received significant donations this year which helped to offset the cost of some events in particular a £2,000 contribution from Winkworths in sponsorship to cover the considerable expenses for the summer fair. In addition to the financial donation, Sophie Kotch noted the considerable in kind donation (not featured in the accounts) which Winkworths gave through marketing, printing leaflets and undertaking a door drop service to promote the summer fair.

Sophie Kotch noted that the Summer and Easter Egg Hunt donations included some membership fees. The Summer Fair thanks to the donation of Winkworths had returned a very small profit this year (unlike the previous year). The Chair added a thank you to all the volunteers who helped on the day including the Oval Montessori Nursery for running all the childrens activities and supplying equipment, and the Covent Garden Market for their contribution to the plant stall. Donations also included very generous contributions through some local couples whose wedding lists had included gifts to the Friends of Vauxhall Park and also from the volunteers in Regents Bridge Gardens and the Vauxhall CIC for their contribution of plants for the newly erected Pergola.

The Treasurer noted that £500 had been spent as a one off for the Orchard which had been a success and was growing well.

The Chair thanked Sophie for her work as Treasurer over the year.

## **4. Chair's Report**

### Highlights for the year

- Orchard planting – trees all survived and doing very well.

- Erection of new pergola finally completed with support from the Friends for the planting around it replacing the plants that were lost.
- Much more volunteering in the park – dead heading, tidying up around entrances, clearing up of maze in the Rose Garden – with many thanks to the Vauxhall CIC and Christina Burnett, as well as Tommy Candler and those in Regent's Bridge Gardens for organizing the events.

### Planning

Vauxhall Park had been well represented by Polly Freeman and Helen Monger at every event and meeting involving proposals for tall buildings within the Vauxhall Nine Elms Development Opportunity Area (VNEB). The Chair asked Helen Monger to explain further.

Helen Monger said that Vauxhall Park had been promised £350k from Downing, building student accommodation on South Lambeth Road opposite the park and £200k from CLS who were building Vauxhall Square. However, Helen Monger explained that due to the complexity of funding arrangements set up through the Planning Department at Lambeth Council, making sure that we received the money was not a foregone conclusion and would not be forthcoming immediately as it was dependent on the plans actually being delivered. Helen Monger reported that despite the offer of £350k by Downing, £25k had been top-sliced at the planning meeting for DIF funding, which was exclusively allocated to projects within the VNEB area, which does not include Vauxhall Park. CLS had offered a direct contribution to the Park but at the planning meeting Lambeth Council decided to include this contribution in the S.106 agreement.

Vauxhall Park had also been excluded from the local planning document the SPD – which was signed off in cabinet and allows for tall buildings all along South Lambeth Road despite Polly Freeman's clear objections on behalf of the Friends which she presented at the Council meeting earlier in the week. There were plans afoot to develop Keybridge House and Polly and Helen would continue their efforts to limit the damage to the park and secure benefits where possible for all users. The Chair thanked Helen and Polly for all their considerable efforts in relation to planning.

### Procurement

Lambeth Parks Forum has been working with the council on the re-letting of the maintenance contract. The Chair is a member of the working group with the Chair and Secretary of the Forum. The top priorities for Forum representatives were improved gardening, combined with opportunities for training and employment. The current proposal was for a 10 year contract from April 2014 combining trees maintenance and parks across the borough worth approximately £35m. The Council were looking for savings and working up proposals for the OJEU tender, but the Forum had yet to see the contractual requirements and specifications of works which will be critical. Lambeth Council were keen to see Friends' groups take on responsibility for management of Parks to help deliver savings. This led to a brief discussion about the use of volunteers, asset transfer, green champions and the CIC String of Pearls.

The Chair particularly thanked all the volunteers who had put so much energy into keeping the park looking as good as it did despite the local authority budget cuts and difficulties faced by the Parks Department.

### **5. Election of Officers**

Chair, Teresa Clay; Secretary, Laura Cook, Membership Secretary, Polly Freeman; Treasurer, Sophie Kotch and all existing Committee Members (Louise Norwood; Seth Taylor, Helen Monger, Susan Smith) all re-elected as Trustees to serve the next year on the Board of the Friends of Vauxhall Park.

### **6. Scheduled Events**

The following dates were agreed:

20 January 2013 - Members Party 7-9pm at Parco Café. Members could renew on the door.  
16 March 2013 - Easter Egg Hunt  
23 June 2013 (provisional – subject to other sporting fixtures and local school fetes) –  
Summer Fair.

There would be three Open Meetings to be agreed after the meeting by the Trustees and published on the website.

## **7. Constitution**

The Chair said that as had been reported in previous minutes, our constitution had been in place since 1999. She presented a new constitution based on the Charity Commission model for small charities with charitable objectives modelled on other local Friends' groups recognised by HMRC for tax purposes as charities. This was important in order to enable tax relief, especially gift aid and possibly VAT in the future. So long as income is under £5,000 a year the Friends of Vauxhall Park could be considered a charity by HMRC. If the Friends received an annual income above £5000, the Friends would need to register with the Charity Commission but this would involve much more work on the audit and accounts.

There was discussion about the minimum number to be quorate for formal decisions involving changing the constitution but it was considered best to keep it simple and in the end 10 members was considered sufficient. The constitution was unanimously adopted and the Committee were asked to sign it.

## **8. Maintenance Issues**

### Maintenance and other suggestions

A number of problems had been flagged up through walkabouts with Polly Freeman and our Parks Officer Mickey Penney. Members also raised a number of important concerns at the meeting. These include:

- It was important that the Pergola was replanted properly.
- The beds around the entrances (with the notable exception of Fentiman Road handled by volunteers through the Friends of Vauxhall Park) were emphasised as a priority.
- A trial using pellets around rose bushes using compacted coffee beans was endorsed.
- New Play Equipment – much of it was very old with the last piece of new equipment now about 10 years old and replacement was a priority.
- The fallen down/decayed tree in the Children's area could not be replaced as there was no council budget. The Friends were exploring ideas for carving it into something more interesting which could be played on.
- Iron Pergola – which looked Victorian but was actually 1980s in the children's area, was very damaged and corroding quickly. It would benefit from more and better planting.
- Moss on tennis courts and playground was now perilous and courts were in need of repair
- New covered notice boards were needed - all our signs had been repeatedly removed over the last few months resulting in unnecessary expense to replace them.
- A suggestion for a sensory garden to be introduced into the park at a later date would be explored in future.
- A number of people raised the issue of rubbish being left and not collected frequently enough with bins overflowing.

Areas the Friends had made progress on included:

- Restoring the fountain base – a donor who wished to remain anonymous was thanked for their generous contribution. Quotes from 3 masons were being sought and it was hoped work could be completed this year in time for the fountains being switched on this summer.

- The Fawcett Society had offered to pay to replace their damaged sign and Polly Freeman had arranged an appropriate plaque for which the friends of Vauxhall would contribute 50% and the Fawcett Society the other half.

Tommy Candler urged people to get involved and organize street volunteer parties to help in the park. Travis Perkins could perhaps donate bags for clearance parties. There was also a need to coordinate with Mickey Penny the collection of the debris after the volunteer work as it was unreasonable to carry it into people's personal rubbish.

## **9. Any other business**

### Lavender Garden

Jacqui Thompson explained that she ran a South Lambeth Road Autism Group and she asked the Friends whether they would be happy for her to take young people into the park to pick the lavender and make lavender bags. The group regularly visit the park and really appreciate what it has to offer. The Chair explained that a local person (Ruth Morgan) already collects the lavender and sells it giving a proportion of the proceeds back to the park but that the Friends would look at involving the group in activities in the park.

**Helen Monger**  
**7 February 2013**