**Attendance**:

Charles Vyvyan, Liz Vyvyan, Andrea Hofling, Louise Norwood, Ruth Morgan, Nicola Gurung, Anne Rogers, Martyn Thomas, Tessa King-Farlow, Susan Smith Henrietta Sitwell, Jill Gregson, Tommy Candler, John Roome, Helen Holmes, Joseph Samuels, Ross Davies, Jane Wenlock, Polly Freeman, Sarah Barber, Helena Lewis, Philip Normal, Councillor Jane Edbrooke, Byron Green

1. **Meeting commenced**:

10:31am. All were welcomed by the Chair, Charles Vyvyan.

1. **Apologies**:

Charles King-Farlow, Faith Boardman, Helen Monger, Grainne Sherry, Robert Harwood, David Groves, David Hankin, Clare Church

1. **Minutes of last meeting & any matters arising**

The minutes of last public meeting, held on 1 October 2016, were approved.

The Chair noted that in the interim the Committee had decided not to pursue the option of engaging consultants to investigate the future development of the Friends. It was his view, however, that there was still a need to increase the Friends’ outreach into the community, to achieve greater involvement in the Park activity, increased membership and greater diversity.

1. **Membership Secretary’s Report**

Polly reported that this currently stands at 96 including 42 family members. The membership generates an income of £1189 via subscriptions, which are quite low starting at £2 for an individual, although this is supplemented by donations.

Now that we are a charity (thanks to Charles King-Farlow) we can also take advantage of the Gift-Aid that donations are eligible

The latest newsletter (number 33,) has been circulated. Two newsletters are published each year highlighting issues relating to the Park. Mailings to the membership can feature issues of local concern and interest such as the current threat to the Triangle Playground near Ashmole Primary School.

Members suggested that there could be different types of membership (e.g. life memberships). Helena Lewis undertook to investigate setting up Direct Debits although it should be investigated whether we would receive the same amount in donations.

1. **Treasurer’s Report & Accounts**

The Treasurer explained additional income came from four main sources each year:

* + - * + the Easter Egg Hunt;
        + oil from the lavender harvest;
        + the Summer Fair; and
        + sponsorship of the Summer Fair by Winkworth.

We do have a healthy bank balance at the moment that has been building up and stands at around £34,000.

The Chair noted that receipt of Gift-Aid from charitable status requires greater dispersement.

It was also pointed out that reduction in funding for parks management via the local authority means that a greater burden may be placed on the Friends. The Friends must be wary of taking responsibility for too much given a voluntary body capacity for delivering in the long term

1. **Report on changes to the structure of LBL Parks Department**

There have been two recent developments

* Officers from Veolia being brought in-house. The Parks Department team are now called Lambeth Landscapes
* the abandonment of the Cooperative Parks model Lambeth to develop a model of management outside of council control. The Vauxhall One proposal was also abandoned due to insufficient financial clarity from Lambeth

Currently we are in a situation where Lambeth continue to own and manage the park and the Friends do not currently have the capacity to take this over, so there are real dangers to the future of the Park. On a positive note, Charles and Polly have met Kevin Crook, Head of Neighbourhoods, who they have great confidence in,

Councillor Jane Edbrooke explained that the cut to the maintenance budget is actually 56%, not 50% as previously announced

The restructure has also meant that we have lost Theresa Hoare who has been a valuable Parks Officer.

Michael Penny as the main point of contact for Vauxhall Park who will be following the maintenance contract drawn up by Kevin Crook. The contract specifies a minimum level of maintenance that we can expect and allows for two site visits a year. There will be two dedicated email contacts to facilitate communication of any issues that need resolving.

A member asked what will LB Lambeth do? The response was that Lambeth will still be responsible for maintenance as far as they can be. The member also queried FOVP links with the “Save Our Libraries” campaign and noted the Council’s rejection of their libraries proposal but welcomed the move to bring Parks’ services back in-house.

Another question revealed the annual budget to be £2.7 million.

The Chair emphasised that commitment to delivery of a service is different to an outcome, however we should give the new arrangements the benefit of the doubt. It was also mentioned that Polly and he are trying to keep a check on how things are operating in the Park and would continue to pressure the local authority to maintain quality.

A member wondered whether the Park achieving Green Flag status again this year would lead to any additional funding. This is not the case, it was rather flattering that we awarded the Green Flag. The local authority are keen for this to continue and will do all they can to assist.

A question was raised by a member regarding the issue of the Parks Service no longer being able to keep the Park locked at night and what might the implications for things like insurance liability if this were to happen?

Discussions had taken place examining ways of mitigating the effects of this on the Park. Councillor Edbrooke was able to confirm, however, that the Council have given a commitment to continue the locking and unlocking of Vauxhall Park, due to the proximity of Vauxhall’s night time economy. She was adamant that this service must be maintained.

1. **Chairs Report**

Charles gave a brief round-up of the highlights of 2016 including:

* + The re-organisation of the Parks Department notably bringing it back in house;
  + Cuts to the Parks’ budget with the prospect of it shrinking smaller still;
  + Lamentably, the loss of Theresa Hoare as parks officer responsible for Vauxhall Park and thanks were expressed to her
  + Mickey Penney, Operations Manager responsible for Vauxhall Park will not be on demand so engagement will be marginal;
  + Louise’s *Easter Egg Hunt* has an “unmissable spirit of fun” which raises the FOVP profile and attract new member - we are very grateful to her for organising it;
  + Thanks must go to Winkworth for their support for the Vauxhall Park Summer Fair financially, with leaflet printing and other ways;
  + The Fair remains an integral part of the FOVP calendar in 2017 and will take place on Sunday, 18th June this year, although not under Polly’s steady direction, Christine Homer from Richbourne Terrace will be taking on this job instead;
  + Our gardening group met twice under Tessa King-Farlow’s guidance, which we are most grateful for;
  + It is most likely that the impressive corner beds (particularly the one by the Fentiman Road/Stanley Close entrance) had a great influence on our Green Flag

being awarded after the blind inspection visit. Thanks were expressed in particular to Tessa King-Farlow who leads the gardening groups and Anne Rogers who works with her - the Chair also asked that Jane pass on thanks to Kevin Crook

* + FOVP spent £600 on plants for the model village (although the unplanned/unannounced arrival of another lot of plants from the Council a couple of weeks later complicated matters);
  + Ninety kilograms of lavender was harvested for processing into oil - ideas for rebranding of the oil and an aerosol byproduct are welcome, Ruth to send a briefing note for the website. Thanks were expressed to Ruth for facilitating the distillation of the oil at the Carshalton Lavender Field Still and to Laurie Rudham for allowing us to use it for free.
  + The existing *Vauxhall Motors Lavender Garden* plant stock is reaching the end of its productive life and a tender has been put out for its replanting into a sundial arrangement - there is some debate having a rolling programme to replace it in the future so that we don’t have to do such a drastic replanting
  + There is a question of future Vauxhall Motors sponsorship [estimated value of £20k) as they have just been taken over
  + The Community Payback scheme workers come each Thursday have made a really useful contribution e.g. planting of 1000 bulbs from the *Metropolitan Public Gardens Association*, trimming back of the borders and helping with the lavender harvest - please thank and encourage them.
  + We had a successful Parco Summer Party in 2016 and will take place again on 4th July this year;
  + We have met with staff from the American Embassy (said to be nearing completion) as we want to develop links with them;
  + It has been disappointing that the fountain has not yet been brought back into operation. There has been some confusion but we are hoping it will be bought back into service rather than the unusable drinking fountain being replace
  + The removal of the brick British Gas structure is a matter between the local authority and British Gas. It has not been decommissioned as promised by LBL.

FOVP have approached Mount Anvil to see if their demolition workers on site at Keybridge House could take the structure down. They have agreed subject to LBL arranging for the gas supply to be decommissioned.

* + Tree maintenance and pruning is dealt with under a separate arboricultural budget (the Lambeth Council Tree Maintenance Contract), which is a reactive service that can respond quickly e.g. where a health & safety issue like a hanging branch arises.

1. **Election of Officers for 2017**

The Chair offered thanks to Polly and the rest of the committee for maintaining the quality of the Park over the past year. He also announced that Faith Boardman had offered to join the committee. Her experiences as a former chief executive of Lambeth Council, current Chair of Vauxhall City Farm and Board member of Vauxhall One will bring a great deal of useful experience to the FOVP

It was proposed and seconded that this AGM, being quorate, elect the following as the committee for 2017:

Chair: Charles Vyvyan

Treasurer: Helena Lewis

Secretary: Clare Church

Membership Secretary: Polly Freeman

Children’s events: Louise Norwood

Byron Green

Tommy Candler

Sophie Hunter-Kotch

Charles King-Farlow

Faith Boardman

Henrietta Sitwell

Sara Frith

The motion was agreed without dissent.

The Chair proposed that two initiatives be introduced and asked for volunteers (or suggestions for the roles):

* + To take over from Polly as Membership Secretary so freeing her up to deal with other issues. The role would involve responsibility for sending out membership forms, reminders for renewing and pursing payment of subscriptions etc
  + Someone take on the responsibility to run a gardening club: This will be require recruitment of volunteers. Horticultural expertise could be found from a different source.

Members suggested that this be put on the website; that the FOVP also get in touch with the Fentiman Road & Richbourne Terrace Residents’ Association; put this in the newsletter; and to look into twinning with libraries gardening clubs (e.g. Tate South Lambeth). The Garden Museum was also mentioned.

Councillor Edbrooke also suggested contacting the St George Wharf Residents Association. The Chair asked that she forward the appropriate contact through to Polly.

1. **Report on the Masterplan and for the year ahead**

It was reported that the saga of the Masterplan redesign is a long one currently with the end not in sight.

Councillor Edbrooke updated the meeting that there have been some concerns with the previous One O’clock Club (now resolved), the play park (safeguarding) and with the cafe (lease/leaseholder issues).

In the coming iteration and consultation on the redesign process there would need to be consideration of things such as what is to become of the empty building arising from the One O’clock Club moving e.g. new green space and/or tree planting.

Next steps will include seeking views from the Friends and other users of the Park. The final stages of the redesign will hopefully take place by the coming summer and with s106 and CIL (proceeds from developers) considerable funding will hopefully provide the capital investment to safeguard it. [The Chair later noted that the s106 & CIL monies of around £500 000 are pretty much restricted to capital investment, not operational.]

In response to a query about the forms of consultation envisaged, a variety of formats were proposed including (though not limited to) a widespread leaflet drop and approaching young users of the MUGA, TRAs from Ashmole and Wyvil Estates, and other identifiable groups park users.

The Chair indicated that paths and trees would have to be key priorities.

Members asked for more information regarding the limitations with the current cafe lease and why we are unable to use the site to generate income? Councillor Edbrooke explained that the leaseholder of the cafe is charged only a peppercorn rent but charges the operators of the business a more market level rent of £11,000/quarter. The Council has been trying to get the leaseholder to the table but this is proving difficult, however the local authority’s legal section is looking into the lease.

Councillor Edbrooke made one further comment regarding the Masterplan in that she had asked for it to be phased.

An advertisement for a new gardener for Vauxhall’s 5 parks had been posted, however it attracted only three applicants. Unfortunately, in this instance, two did not meet sufficient criteria and the other did not turn up for interview so it is back to square one. The Chair encouraged members to use their personal relationships to assist in spreading word about the vacancy.

Looking forward, the Chair emphasized that the increase in park usage will be considerable given the sheer number of residential units, workplaces and other developments on the Park’s doorstep, many due to come online in the very near future. This, in addition to pressures from shrinking service provision and park finance discussed earlier, brings an added imperative to committing to greater outreach by the FOVP into the community engaging members and volunteers of a wider and diverse nature. We need to corral as many people as possible into the organisation.

A poster initiative (see insert) was recently undertaken on by Henrietta Sitwell as a step towards increasing awareness and recruitment, Thanks were expressed to her for taking this on.

Members queried how usage statistics were gathered and suggested that these should be tested considering Keybridge House etc.

1. **Events/reminders**

* 1st April, Saturday Easter Egg Hunt
* 24th May, Wednesday Public Meeting 8pm
* 18th June, Sunday Summer Fair
* 4th July, Tuesday Members Party
* 23rd September, Saturday Public Meeting 10:30 a.m.

***Easter Egg Hunt***

*- Louise Norwood needs volunteers for putting up posters.*

***Summer Fair***

*- Volunteers for even just an hour on the day would be great*

*- A note to those with spare plants to remember the Fair’s plant stall*

1. **AOB**

Andrea Hofling from the Kennington Oval & Vauxhall Forum (KOV Forum) encouraged FOVP members to take a look at the display of results from their initial consultation on a Neighbourhood Plan which would supplement London Plan, Lambeth Plan and other guidance on planning issues.

She also noted that all of the evidence and policy development was available for viewing and comment at [www.kovforum.org.uk](http://www.kovforum.org.uk) where you can also sign up for free membership and updates.