

FRIENDS OF VAUXHALL PARK



Wheatsheaf Hall, Wheatsheaf Lane, SW8 2UP
Monday 16th March at 8pm

- 1. Apologies:** Helena Lewis (Treasurer), Louise Norwood, Sophie Kotch, Cllr Jane Edbrook, Cllr Claire Holland, Cllr Jack Hopkins

Committee in attendance:

Polly Freeman – Acting Chair, Membership Secretary
Laura Cook – Secretary
Helen Monger
Tommy Candler
Teresa Clay

- 2. Minutes of last meeting and any matters arising**

All agreed minutes of last meeting. Polly reminded everybody that minutes from all our meetings are published on our website, www.vauxhallpark.org.uk.

Polly explained that Cllr Edbrook had indicated that she was understandably very busy and was hoping that someone would become Chair soon. Polly advised that a local resident is keen to be our Chair but has a number of other commitments so might not be able to take on the job. We will be in a position to confirm the Chair at the next AGM in January 2016.

Polly was also pleased to announce that Byron Green had volunteered to join the Board. He was elected to committee unanimously.

- 3. Maintenance Issues**

Mickey Penney, Lambeth Parks' Officer is now instigating walk-about on a regular basis. Veolia are doing some maintenance jobs and Community Payback others. Polly reported that the quality of work was sometimes a concern, for example a mulberry tree planted by Louise Norwood in memory of her late husband was recently destroyed. Mickey Penney has kindly agreed to replace it.

Polly it advised that on a recent walkabout Mickey agreed for the low railings outside the One O'Clock Club are to be moved to around the Fentiman Road entrance flower bed to protect the work of the volunteers and keep dogs out.

- 4. Development of Playground and Masterplan**

Helen Monger explained that since the consultation event in the park on 6th December and the leaflets that were circulated, many locals had given comments. Kinnear Landscape Architects and the Steering Committee have since been considering the plans, taking into account all the comments.

The hope is to incorporate more into the park and change the layout to help it feel more spacious and include a circular walking route around the edge, currently truncated by the Lavender Garden and the Children's play area.

During consultation, and courtesy of the research underpinning the masterplan, the steering group has come to the conclusion that the One O'Clock Club building (OOC) is coming to the end of its economic life. At the same time, Lambeth Young Services is trying to change the way it operates with a mixture of free and profit making events and has sought to outsource the service. At present, there have been no viable bids for the service in Vauxhall Park.

Based on this evidence, Polly and Helen reported that the steering group were therefore considering demolishing the current building and moving it to the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) near the Lawn Lane entrance. The OOC building would then be at edge of park with external access so could be open for longer hours offering additional uses outside the operation of the One O'clock club service. The MUGA would then need to be moved further along wall, although the exact location of that move had yet to be determined. It was hoped that the new OOC could have a seasonal kiosk, a room to let out for children's parties, a place to keep gardening tools and possibly some loos. In discussing this idea of a new building, the possibility had been raised of allowing a developer to build additional levels thus subsidising the cost of construction. However, after much consideration, the plan was to limit to one storey only so as to: protect the park's access to sunlight; ensure safeguarding of young children without overlooking; and to maintain the principles of keeping land associated with the park for that use only.

Kinnear and the committee are also working on developing the playground. There is likely to be a minibus tour with local children to other playgrounds to ascertain what equipment is best. Some of the new equipment will be for older children.

There have been discussions about moving the dog area. It has now been decided that it will remain where it is for the foreseeable future, although one of the sections might be removed.

It is likely that hedgerows will replace the fences to make softer boundaries. Christina Burnett, Tommy Candler and others expressed concern that this would leave the Lavender Garden vulnerable and would result in significant increased maintenance costs. Polly reassured them that the hedge plants would be carefully chosen to ensure they created a dog-proof barrier and maintained a level of seclusion.

A question was raised about whether we could have a bicycle path to keep cyclists separate from pedestrians but Polly advised that cycling is against the by-laws of the park and would not be encouraged in any future design. Members present supported the masterplan's continued progress.

5. Summer Fair 2015

Polly reported that the Summer Fair is nearly all booked. New attractions include a motorised rodeo bull. There will also be bouncy inflatable slides, go-karts, crazy golf, donkeys and much more. If anybody new would like to run a stall, all are welcome. Polly encouraged everyone to come and steward 21st June 2-5pm.

6. Easter Egg Hunt 2015

Polly called for volunteers to put up posters in the local area prior to the event, hide eggs from 10am on the day, 28th March, and then help steward.

7. Lambeth's Culture 2020 Proposals

Polly reported that she had been to the Parks' Forum (of all Friends groups) and advised that 50% of Lambeth parks' maintenance budget is to be cut, from £4.4m to £2.2m. Besides grass cutting and litter picking there will be little budget to pay for anything.

This ties into the Cooperative Management Model which is a hybrid of the council and the Friends. Vauxhall Park will be the pilot to take control of the horticultural budget. We are planning to form a committee, including local schools and voluntary bodies, to appoint a gardener and direct work. It is not clear how much money, if any, we would have. We could potentially take control of the rent from the Café and Nursery School to employ a gardener who we could share with another park or green space.

Polly expressed concerns about whether the new playground will be maintained properly. She suggested we need to think carefully about whether maintenance will be feasible for all items in the Masterplan - for example the Fawcett Garden and gym equipment.

There will be a workshop this weekend to discuss practicalities, Polly to distribute information. We need to email and tweet our councillors to try and protect the park and its budget.

The Veolia contract is due to be renewed next year, we do not know who will replace them or what the budget will be. Polly questioned whether the Friends should pay for remedial work on trees as part of 125th anniversary celebrations using its reserves. It was agreed that a quote should be sought.

There will be pressure to have events in the park to help generate income to fund maintenance and horticulture, for example an outdoor cinema hired out on a commercial basis. The Friends would need to organise and run the event.

Tommy Candler suggested that the maze clearing should be an annual event on a specified weekend such as the last weekend in July. We would need a list of volunteers.

Christina Burnett wondered if it would be worth having a planned lavender clearing event. Local people could pay to cut their own lavender.

8. AOB

Penny Sinclair, the Fortune Teller at Summer Fair for many years has died recently. She will be enormously missed. Polly recorded her thanks and the membership echoed their appreciation and sadness at this news.

Laura Cook
Secretary
21st March 2015