

## **Notes of Friends of CW Parks and Green Spaces Sub Group (CWRA)**

**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020 at 7.30 pm**

### 1. Introductions and welcome

The meeting was held online via Zoom. Bryony opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Twelve people joined the meeting.

### 2. Formal arrangements: nomination and election of Chair

This was the first formal meeting of the re-established group with the revised title Friends of Colliers Wood Parks and Open Spaces. Bryony nominated Margaret Rogers as Chair. Maria and Helen seconded the nomination.

### 3. Purpose of sub group

Margaret took the chair and gave the background and purpose of the group, and development to date. She talked about the perception many of us had of our green spaces as untidy and sometimes neglected. She commented on the establishment of Friends groups in other areas and that there had been a positive impact on these parks and green spaces.

Margaret outlined the key aims are to improve biodiversity and the natural habitat of plants and wildlife, being as environmentally friendly as possible, along with having fun and building a social and diverse community which would support physical and mental health. She explained that the Friends group works in partnership with our ward councillors, thanking Laxmi and Caroline in particular for their involvement. We also work with council officers from the Parks department and with idverde. Idverde is the company commissioned by Merton Council to maintain the parks and green spaces. The Friends group has had meetings and walkabouts with both council officers and idverde managers in both CW Recreation Ground and Wandle Park, with another planned imminently in Wande Park with a view to discussing partnership working on the entrance to the park at Baltic Close as well as river management and general maintenance off the park.

The work of the Friends is on a drop in/drop out basis, with people being as involved as they wish. The group is affiliated to a range of other groups and has been helped in particular by Jane Plant, from Merton Tree Wardens, who is also the Chair of Merton Independent Green Spaces. The list of affiliates is considerable and includes Sustainable Merton - Tom Walsh being an active Friend, Wandle Valley, South East Rivers Trust (SERT), London National Park City - Emily being an active Friend, Go Parks London - Maria being an active Friend. Anyone is free to join any of these organisations and the overlap makes for productive networking.

Margaret explained that funding had been applied for on behalf of the Friends group and most of it had come via the Ward Allocation Fund, awarded by our local Ward Councillors, and that we also had funding from Wandle Valley Forum and idverde Community Investment Fund. Justin Swarbrick had designed our lovely logo and leaflet as well as getting our leaflet printed.

Margaret asked Helen to give a financial breakdown. Helen explained that as a sub group of CWRA, our income and expenditure goes through the CWRA bank account. We will therefore be accounting/reporting to the main meetings of CWRA as well as to the our ward councillors and the Merton Council ward allocation fund team. She mentioned that the recent consultation from Merton Council Future Merton department presents local plans for all areas of Merton including Colliers Wood. This includes plans for green spaces being developed to link and improve areas as well as outlining substantial high rise, and higher than existing, buildings in several parts of CW. It is therefore relevant to this group but is also being addressed by CWRA. Attendance at CWRA meetings and the AGM is encouraged.

We have received £2544.88 via ward allocation funding, which included £1400 specifically for river training and maintenance. The remaining amount was for Baltic Close, the Memorial Garden and the planters in the Rec and for bulbs. There is a pending amount of £1460 awaiting confirmation as to whether work promised by an officer of Merton Council in areas we had applied for (High Street planters and large raised beds edging Wandle Park on the High Street) will be done by this officer or not. We also received £200 from Wandle Valley Forum for our launch event during Wandle Valley Fortnight. We await tools and high vis vests with our logo on, courtesy of idverde community investment fund.

We have spent £993.39 on plants, litter pickers, stencils, hessian and paint, fencing to protect raised bed in Memorial Garden and bulbs.

Margaret described how our collective actions help to bring the parks/green spaces into the streets and planters are a significant aspect of our work. She mentioned the work on planters and in the Memorial Garden and how the raised bed which people have worked so hard on is really suffering. Plans are afoot to make it harder for children and animals to trample on it! Myrna Close work days are organised by Fiona and we will liaise closer with her so that the dates are advertised more. She asked that people also be prepared to report concerns to idverde – [slwpenquiries.merton@ideverde.co.uk](mailto:slwpenquiries.merton@ideverde.co.uk) and the Safer Neighbourhood Team on 07768 178370, as well as take and post positive photos.

Follow up questions followed:

3.1 Tom W asked that the Friends reach out to young people to help them cope with, and respond to the demands of climate change.

3.2 Pollution and flooding from the Wandle was raised by Matthew who referred us to a very useful website <https://www.londonwaterkeeper.org.uk/londons-chalk-streams-need-real-time-sewer-spill-alerts> which outlines the legal obligations the Environment Agency has and provides information on pollution spills into the Wandle. Margaret reminded us that the SERT training should have happened last weekend (21st November) but was postponed due to lockdown. This is to fully equip a robust and small group of volunteers with the know how to clean the river in Wandle Park without causing damage to river life. This will happen ASAP and give us as a group more control over keeping an eye on the river and keeping it clean and healthier. Lesley also

raised queries about pollution and Margaret explained the feedback from the Environment Agency but also that we shall continue to work with idverde.

3.3 Following reference to a grant application that Zoe and Justin had made for play facilities for older children, which was turned down earlier this year, Sarah seconded the really urgent need for improved provision for older children, and told the group about an application that had been made 15 years ago for a skate park. Tom W also commented on this and said that he thought it worth asking again as at the time Thames Water had given a very unconsidered 'no' but the area remains as it was then and would be ideal. It is the old sewage farm area between Wandle Park and the Wandle Nature Reserve. Caroline, one of our ward councillors said she would ask further questions about this.

3.4 Maria spoke about social media for the Residents Association and explained how she was changing the facebook page. Emily has been managing the Friends facebook page. Together they would set up a group to look at social media and would welcome suggestions, and offers to join them.

#### 4. Future plans

Upcoming events:

1st December - litter picking 9.00 am on the main road in front of the SavaCentre

7th December - clearing planters in Acre Road and planting bulbs. Lesley volunteered and there were already three other volunteers which is enough.

12/13th December - work sessions over this weekend to plant bulbs along the hedgerow bordering the field in the Rec and the path next to Singlegate school, and in the borders of the path between Devonshire Road and Myrna Close. Margaret asked for suggestions of any other locations for bulb planting. Volunteers please. the workdays will be organised to respect social distancing so those who volunteer will be contacted with times and locations nearer the time.

Future workdays will be held on the first Sunday of the month (February onwards!) at 10am.

#### 5. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 12 January 2021

The meeting closed at 8.20 p.m.