



Minutes of the Friends of Ruskin Park Annual General Meeting, via Zoom 11 January 2022

Attendees:

Trustees

Chris Norris
Deepak Sardiwal
Jared Cotton (treasurer)
Kate Malleson
Lucy Hadfield (chair)
Mandy Millward
Michelle Warbis

and 53 members and others

Welcome

Lucy Hadfield, chair, introduced the FoRP Committee members and welcomed Lambeth colleagues Jim Dickson, Becca Thackray, Pauline George, Kevin Crook, Dan Thomas, Lara Mifsud-Bonici, Tom Smith. All members and non-members present were welcomed.

Apologies for absence

Julie Simpson, trustee.

Minutes of last AGM, 12th January 2021

The meeting approved the minutes, with the date corrected from 14 January to 12 January 2021.

Trustee changes

- The sad death of Dave Benson, Treasurer, was noted.
- The Julie Simpson and Chris Norris were re-appointed by the membership.
- The appointment of Deepak Sardiwal, Michelle Warbis and Jared Cotton by trustees after the last AGM was approved by the membership. Jared had taken the treasurer role.

Annual Report and Accounts 2020-21

FoRP's accounting year ran from September to August. The annual report explained the purposes, gave an assessment of the year and strategy in the future,

The chair presented a summary of the report. Highlighted reflections were:

- Our aims and objectives remained the same as previous years
- Even greater appreciation of green spaces for health and wellbeing was shown during the Covid 19 pandemic, and a big increase in the use of the park and of volunteers supporting Lambeth Landscapes.

- Paddling pool was supported through fundraising for repairs
- Events continued complying with Covid rules i.e. bandstand concerts and the summer fete,
- New landmarks including the sundial and benches.
- New blood in the committee, in particular supporting volunteers, fundraising, promoting heritage and extending our digital communications.

She drew attention to the lists of volunteers, partners and donors deserving our thanks and appreciation. She was proud of the contributions from committee members this year. She thanked Chris Norris for all he continued to do for FoRP, even after stepping down from the vice-chair role for health reasons. He was owed a huge debt of gratitude.

Looking forward, she mentioned 12 ambitious work streams in 3 categories,

1. Working in Partnership with Lambeth Landscapes and others,
2. Activities initiated by the Friends and
3. What we do to run the charity.

She said that it was unprecedented in recent years to have a programme of improvements guided by a strategic plan and funded by Lambeth's capital programme and other funding sources (see page 3).

We would continue with usual events plus a Ruskin Bark Dog Show, probably in May, and a John Ruskin tree walk in March.

We aimed to bring the Community Garden, the Hut and Depot areas into more active use for the park.

Mandy Millward, trustee, noted the inclusion of the community garden into FoRP and the benefits that will hopefully follow including expanding the number of volunteers and their diversity.

Karen O'Neil, a gardening volunteer, spoke about the rewards of caring for the park and community. Overhauling the labyrinth garden, toilet block area, tropical garden etc. was highly satisfying.

Lucy reminded members that achievement of our intentions depended on volunteers both leading activities and contributing. We posted needs for volunteers in specific areas on our website.

She also said that she intended to step down from the chair role this year after 5 years so a successor/s were needed.

Financial accounts

There was a gap period of several months before Jared Cotton recently took up the role of treasurer. Chris Norris had stepped in in this period to collate the accounts.

An unusual year was reflected in the accounts with a profit of £8,500+, an increase from last year, due to the continued generosity of donors. There were regular and one-off donations including to Dave Benson's memorial fund. A number of grants had also been received. Overall income decreased 20% due to events curtailment by Covid 19 and operating costs reduced by 26%. Reserves were healthy – nearly £60,000 with some to be used for paddling pool and other improvement projects mentioned in the AR.

The Independent Examiner's report did not raise any matters of concern in the accounts.

Questions and Comments to the Committee

These concerned: the roles of FoRP Committee members, the poor state of the heritage lamp posts which needed restoration repairs, such as in Battersea Park, sustainable gardening, the possible introduction of Park Run, seeking financial contributions to the park from National Grid/UK Power Networks. Some responses were given and others would be followed up after the meeting.

The annual report and accounts were approved by a clear majority of members.

The formal business of the AGM was concluded.

Summary of Lambeth Council's Parks' Capital Programme for Ruskin Park

As presented by Kevin Crook, Assistant Director Neighbourhoods and Dan Thomas, Capital Programme Manager.

Many parks had insufficient investment over the years. Most funding came from profits from developers which are geographically restricted. Some parks got significant \$106 got money, others, like RP, did not.

The Council's first ever corporate programme had reallocated funds for parks more flexibly to where it was needed. In the 2020-25 plan, there was an estimated £27m requirement, £3m for RP. We would aim to fund worn out infrastructures. £5m new money for parks had been approved from the £27m and £950K was allocated to RP. There was also some external funding e.g. from the Football Foundation for pitches, and community funding for the paddling pool repairs. Other sources would be explored and applied for.

The work would be managed by a project manager from Lambeth Council's Capital Studio, with a Steering Group established including Lambeth parks officers, ward councillors and Friends of Ruskin Park representatives.

The programme would be guided the joint [Strategic Masterplan](#) published in 2019, though there had been some contextual changes since then. An initial set of priorities had been agreed. However, even this set of priorities was likely to outstrip the budget available and growing cost inflation would reduce the value of the allocation. It was important the community was behind the programme and people could have a say.

Priorities

1. Refurbishment of the paddling pool, largely funded by the local community through, and in association with, the Friends of Ruskin Park.
2. Refurbishment and extension of the playground, giving better provision for older children. This will include the area currently used for the basketball court.
3. Redevelopment of the degraded 'redgra' area, including a new artificial turf football pitch funded by the Football Foundation, a new basketball facility and landscaping.
4. Refurbishment of both toilet blocks and the kiosk building.
5. Path re-surfacing and fencing works, including any changes to dog restricted areas following public consultation.
6. Lamp column repairs and lighting.
7. Drainage works.
8. Wayfinding and signage improvements.

9. Creation of a conservation plan as necessary to support further funding bids.

Questions and Answers

Q: Is there a timeframe for the FA-funded pitch? And for the playground works?

A: The football pitch is unlikely to start before 2023, it's still at the planning stage. We hope the playground works will happen over next winter for spring 2023.

Q: Will the basketball and football pitches be combined?

A: There will be a dedicated football pitch. We are keen to keep an informal kickabout area and replace the basketball court. Netball might be a possibility. There are various options on the table for reconfiguring the existing footprint.

Q: The masterplan referenced a possible new café in the depot area. Is that on the list of items being looked at over the next 2 years (subject to funding)? And what about the old stables?

A: The aspired location for a park café was the old depot when it was thought that the stable block could be brought back into a usable facility for the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust. But that plan fell through. Lambeth has tried to market the building. We are looking for any additional unspent capital in Council coffers. There is no concrete answer yet and a café in the depot is therefore not in the first tranche of priorities for the near future. We will undertake core repair work to stop further deterioration of the stable block.

Discussion

- The stable block could make a fantastic café location. The basic structure is already there. It could be along the lines of Beckenham Place stable café. This frees up the Depot for an area of "Engaging and Joyful" planting which the park is a little lacking in at present.
- The stable block is not the right place for a café and it's hard to see what it could be used for. There have been many things tried, none of which have worked. South London is full of buildings, and it could be used for additional green space.
- The stable block is locally listed by Lambeth Planning, so there is a presumption that it will be retained and restored rather than demolished.
- Park cafés contribute hugely to the sense of community.

General thanks from attendees and the meeting closed.