

**Friends of West Park Meeting**  
**Thursday 21st January 2016**

Meeting started, 6.35pm.

**Apologies:** Mary Sherwen.

**Present:** Andrew Buckingham, Neil Brimer, Jackie Buckingham, Tom Shepherd, Pippa Smaling, Andy Harrison, Sue Richmond, Mandy Smith, Sherryl King, Aaron King, Valerie and Brian McMain, Tony Cooper, Rob George.

**Site maintenance.**

Pond works to commence before mid March (PS). Waiting for timber fencing to start so PS will chase. Some tree thinning. Bramble cutting back. TC asked what the pond works are. Removing reeds; dipping pond.

BM: is the pond going to be fenced off? PS: yes; specification will include wider fencing include Comets Garth so that a wider plan considered; bike track fencing has to be slightly higher but in a similar style. Indicated to the meeting on the map.

Large willow tree on Comets Garth is leaning and needs removing.

SK: is all this work paid by the levy? PS: yes, as an enhancement. SK: why do we not get a letter through the post on what is proposed for money to be spent on? TS: we have been asking to inform residents on what the levy will be spent on. SK: haven't had any notification of what's being made or built. TC: can't circulate everybody every time a decision is made. SK: couldn't get them all into this meeting? Council would ask everybody in the area if something is agreeable before doing it? JB: Council only notify if major changes are being done. SK: if we're paying then we should be notified. TC: minutes are there online to show what's being discussed so they are available online. TS: it's useful to clarify that the council are responsible for maintaining the park. SK: I don't understand, I've never heard of a levy because the council already maintain things and other people use the park as well. TC: the explanation of what it covers is reiterated in the annual letter, but it's to cover enhancements and improvements. The level of council involvements has dropped off but are still obliged to do their basics. This would be very basic. The levy pays for enhanced works. SK: so if we've got a problem, the council should fix dog bins etc, but I've fallen where the council come zooming through and leave tracks in the mud. TC: that's the council customer services. TC: Rob George at the council will take that up. SK: I didn't agree to the music festival. This is the first time I've been given notification of the meeting by e-mail. I get an e-mail on the day of the meeting. TC: Pippa's note is just a reminder, they're published in the annual letter. SK: The music festival left a mess, and we paid out of the levy money. I don't agree unless I was asked first. We should get different treatment because we pay. TC: it was discussing in the friends group and proposed. JB: if there are 500 people then you can't send out notification to all 500 for each decision. SK: I don't mind paying for that. TS: The last time we made a

postal shot it was a 10% response. SK: I didn't get one. You shouldn't use the levy to fund something, that's out of order. TS: we all need to read the documentation which was issued to us when we moved in. SK: maintenance. AB: No, it doesn't say maintenance. BM: Is there not a list of spending. NB: It's given out in the annual letter. [some disagreement from new attendees]. NB Every year there's a summer event which is paid by the levy, in every letter it's one of the 4 things that happens every year. SK: I didn't know. JB: each year there's literature saying what's going on with a brochure telling you what's going on. AB: if you're in a tenanted house then you don't necessarily get to see that because it goes to the landlord. SK: no I'm not. NB: we are trying to ensure landlords pass information on. Last year we looked if we could forecast what the spend is to budget in advance so people know that it's not money which gets allocated ad-hoc and that it's planned. SK: that's a lot of money a year. Have you ever thought of putting up solar lights? TC: the council won't adopt such a thing, it has to be street lighting or nothing, and you can't afford to run it privately. But it wasn't designed as being accessible for public access on a night. Any ideas and observations such as that are welcome at this meeting. SK: that's where I walk my dogs at night. TC: lights are approx £1k per column, it would be around £60k for a full install. AH: I wouldn't like that being on Comets Garth.

AB: in summary, SK wants to know in advance of projects before the money is spent, so practically does anybody have any ideas how that could happen. SK: it wouldn't cost very much by e-mail. NB: we don't have everybody's e-mails, that's what we're trying to do, we need to find the best way without wasting your money, because we want to spend the money on improving things in the park. RG: there is a formal structure of which you're now attending, friends group which we've found is enough, if it's well attended then we could meet more often, but its not. So we use that as our feedback mechanism to ask for residents to comment on the way money is spent. Underlying that is a letter each year detailing that expenditure. To me that's the formal structure. There's a website etc, so that's fairly normal in terms of feedback that residents get. If you're saying there needs to be more, then that's a fair comment, but you can come to the friends group. AB: if we wanted to poll every resident each time then that's great, but somebody needs to take that on and the existing friends are already stretched thin. SK: I couldn't do it, I don't have time. AB: that's everybody else's issue too. SK: well who proposed this, was it BAPL [Bussey & Armstrong Projects Ltd]? TC: I proposed that we use a Levy system and the council then approved it. SK: can you explain to me why George Stephenson Drive... AB: this isn't in the scope of the park so please can we leave that out of this meeting. If we want to discuss polling residents, does anybody have any ideas about how we can do that? SK: I will have a think. JB: if you do poll residents and get a very small response, how do you use that information to make a decision because you've got so few respondents. TC: on feedback on the music festival we have had no complaints. JB: I did find the noise too much and could not stay in the house. Is this intended to be annual? TC: it was a 10 year event. JB: it went on all night. It was totally unacceptable. SK: are there marshalls on the park for that? TC: yes the council provided that. RG: we had a lot of compliments as well. JB: but I'm living by the nature reserve and I wouldn't expect it. RG: it's a crossover site. AH: I thought it was a fantastic day and I don't think it was littered when I walked the dog next afternoon. RG: Pippa and I were clearing the next morning.

AB: any other issues SK? SK: the wooden bridge being slippy. PS: strips need to go down, blacksmiths are going to fit them. NB: we do get things done from this meeting, so do please bring them from the group, because from the Levy we can go over and beyond what the council would normally do; that bridge was already approved by the council and is fit for purpose, but the friends have been able to push that improvement though. TS: have you benefited from the footpaths which was from the Levy? SK: yes much better, very good. NB: no rivers in the paths in comparison to divots in previous years. SK: wouldn't the council do paths anyway? AB: not to that level. RG: we would have insisted on tarmac paths which would look awful and would crack, the local authority could not justify the money on that. Many things about West Park would not have happened had we not had a Levy. SK: If it's to do with the council wouldn't the council look after a nature reserve? RG: the council is not required to look after any green spaces at all, just highways and nature reserve. JB: was creating the nature reserve just because you couldn't use that land for another purpose? TC: in reality you could have built on it anyway, but you have to provide some open space anyway, so it's over-generous to a development of this size. It's about 1 in 3 on developed to non-developed, as opposed to normally 10%. RG: when originally priced it was seen as a grass mound, which the council would have taken on, but we wouldn't have taken on a designed landscape so to have a much more complex feature had to come with a means to pay for it. NB: we talk about the golden gravel [paths] but the council would repair it in whatever colour they were using that year, so some of the money is to make it look much nicer than it had been to do a health and safety repair at the lowest cost. RG: across the country parks have gone into decline last 30 years, signs are that will be happening again, West Park is in a fortunate position as future proofed. SK: is that guaranteed forever: RG: yes, and index linked. TS: there was a lot to talk about with many houses coming in future. SK: I've spoken to a lot of houses and they're really against it because everybody else uses it, and against paying for the concert. AB: they can turn up here and voice their concerns. JB: how much was spent on the concert. TC: £5k. NB: which isn't much more than we would have spent on a summer event.

PS: Getting a price for resurfacing on Richmond Close.

NB: is there any other maintenance issues which people would like to raise? We've already spoken about getting the paths widened for vans. SK: the speed of the trucks when emptying the dog bins. AH: I agree with that. RG: I will pass this on. SK: it's just mud and tracks everywhere [from vans]. **Action RG**

AH: Comets Garth, between pond and... PS: not in the Park. TC: northside of footpath and Bellway, is Bellway's. There is a plan through safe routes to school, but it's an issue to take up with Bellway to get these small patches of land adopted.

SK: who does the grass cutting around the estate itself? RG: Highway verge. JB: so in the front of the hospital? TS: that's the owners of the flats. You need to convince the grass cutters not to trim the lower part of the tree as it kills them.

## Events.

PS: does Spooky Walk want to take place on Halloween or during half term? JB: on the day.  
SK: Easter? PS: been too busy. SR: Santa Run was good. NB: money was tight on events in the past, but it is increasing, so more money can now be spent.

AB: the problem with events is that we don't have people to come up with the ideas and then to organise them. So if you want to suggest an event, then do suggest it here. Currently only really NB and PS spend time organising events. NB: from a residents point of view it's not the council's responsibility to do events. We can spend money to buy things in and take that burden on doing events. It takes many months to organise things. If you want lots of little things then great, but for big things need even more time to organise. JB: the survey went out asking how people use it and what events they want but the response was dreadful. Don't know what commitment people want to put in.

AB: on events does anybody have any ideas at all? SK: for summer? AB: for anything. NB: we tend to do the same as the previous year if nobody has any ideas. AB: if nobody has any ideas then we revert to previous year? PS: Possibly looking at a bulb planting event, just waiting for prices on machine, for back end of the year. RG: can we look at starting planting amongst the woodland? Bluebells and so on. SK: I've never seen fencing. NB: that's good. RG: we have a programme of taking the fences away. TS: I'm interested because it's a nature reserve and a public place. Dogs can take some of the nature off the floor. RG: it's an urban site and they have. SK: I've seen no nature up there at all. TS: that demonstrates that the nature is being stripped such as by dogs. [discussions] RG: it's a crossover site between a nature reserve. AB: so in summary, we're happy for a bulb planting event. Agreement. BM: will the wild flowers appear again this year? PS: yes, the perennials will come back. SK: the concert flattened them all. **[Action PS bulb planting]**

PS: does anybody want to do a litter pick? JB: did the school get involved last year? PS: can't remember.

## Community Feedback.

AB: Anybody? NB: this is the point where people might suggest ideas from other parks, or have suggestions for use? SK: Instead of lampposts with solar lights, how about those which you put in the ground on the paths? RG: they are normally very prone to vandalism because the light is close to the ground. You see them in very urban areas. SK: I meant the solar ones. RG: I think they would be easy to dig up. NB: I like the idea, but even repairing the paths costs far too much, there are thousands of metres. We'd have to work out what you want to have and price it up. AB: do you have any idea of which ones? SK: no. AB: can you find one and bring it here. NB: you can take a bit of a risk here, that's the benefit, so we could try it and see if it works. Let's not be afraid to give it a go. **[Action SK to look for lights]**

SK: nobody has heard of West Park. RG: it has been discussed to do produce a leaflet. JB: if SK says nobody should use the park if we pay a levy, so why would you want to

encourage other people to use it with a leaflet. [inconclusive discussions] RG: I think it is worth doing a leaflet. NB: can be difficult to find bike track, can get stuck, maybe a map would be useful. Maybe have a leaflet that could download when people move in. TC: leaflets exist on the BAPL website. **[Action AB ensure leaflet on website]**

RG: South Park is considering a leaflet with a child's treasure hunt. [general agreement that West Park should consider similar]

NB: **Flagpole**. For the new people: it usually takes a few meetings to get something done, so Green Flag is the standard, wouldn't it be a good idea to put the flag at the entrance to the park. We don't have a flagpole, and we need to maintain it every year, so it needs to be a bit of a feature, but which of the three main paths? Does anybody have any idea where to place it? JB: circle at the top. RG: would be a problem as would spoil circle. TS: agree. SK: roundabout on Faverdale? NB: has to be in the park boundary. VM: by the play park? RG: any preferences? SK: [want it where levy payers see it]. NB: and we could have one at every entrance but it's more money. Play park is non partisan, close to main road. Decision: by play park near Caring Sharing Daring. **[Action PS]**

NB: **Signboard**. Play park had a sign at the entrance. Focal point for the park. Take down existing sign and install new proposal [shown to the group]. Which design, how large, what sort of information. [top design, the predominantly black one]. Group opts for A2 in the customisable panel. PS: content for the graphics? TS: needs to be done properly not rushed. AB: Agree. SR: how about the poet who'll be working at BAPL? TC: agree. **[Action TC]**

#### **AOB:**

TS: What's the latest on the proposal for the green belt (water main corridor) by the houses?  
TC: It's starting in a couple of weeks will take a few months.

Meeting ended. 8.05pm.

**Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday 21st April 2016.