

1st Public Meeting of Friends of Coronation Gardens

3rd April 2019, Scout Hut, Pirbright Road

28 people attended the meeting, which was chaired by Charles Runcie.

Background

Charles explained that a small group of local residents (including Charles, Susannah and Nada) had had a few meetings with Enable, Leisure and Culture about the feasibility of setting up a Friends group for Coronation Gardens. Wandsworth Borough Council hopes that all green spaces in the Borough will have a Friends group.

Aims and activities

Susannah outlined the proposed aims of the group. She hopes that the Group will develop a plan of action including who to contact with issues. The proposal is to run 2 or 3 activities each year to develop community spirit and use of the Gardens. Activities might include nature/history walks and a summer event. There had also been interest in restoring the water fountain.

Susannah explained that the group is looking for volunteers and that attendees could fill in a form to share their skills and interests with the Friends.

Role of Enable

Ella from Enable, Leisure and Culture introduced herself and her colleague Marina and explained their role is to support the development of Friends groups.

Enable Leisure and Culture is contracted by Wandsworth Borough Council to run its parks, events, arts and bereavement services.

There are established Friends groups for Battersea Park and Tooting Common. And another group is starting up for Christchurch Gardens.

There is a Charter which outlines the roles and responsibilities of Friends groups and Enable. The role of Friends groups includes noticing issues and raising concerns, as well as thinking of improvements to the green spaces which are outside the remit of Enable. Enable's roles include promoting Friends groups and their events and also helping with any fundraising. Enable will facilitate links between Friends groups to share experiences.

Views of attendees at the meeting

There was need for clarification around the different types of green space in the borough

There is no difference for the Council between 'parks' and 'gardens'. We requested that Enable provide a full list of green spaces in the Borough.

There was a request for clarification about the role of Friends groups, the role of Enable and the Charter between the two

Other boroughs also have Friends groups for green spaces. The Charter is a new document and can be given to anyone who requests it.

There were strong feelings and concerns about basic problems in the Gardens, including litter, dog mess, vandalism and antisocial behaviour.

Many people found that these issues stopped them from enjoying the Gardens. Many of these issues are more widespread in Southfields (for example dog mess in the alley beside Sheringdale School).

Anti-social behaviour is a real issue. Especially for people who live close to the Pirbright Road gate, who feel intimidated by groups of young men hanging around taking drugs.

There is an immediate need to define and list the concerns. A 'walk through' the gardens to list possible changes to improve standards was suggested.

Some ideas for solutions:

- More and better bins, including recycling bins.
- Increasing pride in and use of the Gardens.
- Trying to encourage people to clean up after their dogs.
- Using 'leverage' because the Gardens is used by and surrounded by schools and nurseries to get funding or things changed.
- Cutting down hedges to make the Gardens more open.
- Asking Enable for a management plan for the Gardens (eg thinking about how and when hedges are cut down).
- More lighting.
- Closing the gates at night (this doesn't happen because of resources issues at the Council).
- Highlighting the 'dog free' area. There is a dog free area, but it is not signposted. There was no money for railings.
- Logging times when there are concerns and reporting to Parks Police (or Met Police).
- CCTV (Wandsworth Council had a mobile unit that has been used in the past, but it is in great demand).
- Removal of the cover seat.

Funding of the Friends Group

Cllr Guy Humphries said that they were elected on a pledge to improve Coronation Gardens and that he would back the Friend group in any way he could. He highlighted that there are various pots of money which we could access.

Charles explained that we are planning to apply to the Wandsworth Grant Fund at the Council for £1000 to run the Friends group and run three activities in 2020.

There was a suggestion that a membership fee could be charged. Someone suggested £5 a year.

The Gardens now

We discussed the concrete area. It was explained that this area used to have greenhouses. The Friends group can investigate different ideas.

Local schools and nurseries do use the Gardens. For example for the Mile-a-day initiative.

The by-laws have recently been changed. Although there are signs saying ‘no organised games’ this is no longer the case. The Friend group can clarify and publicise.

There is a dog-free area, but it is not clear where it is.

Future events in the Gardens

There was support for plans to organise a small series of events to encourage people to use the Gardens.

The idea of a summer event celebrating the Gardens was well received. It was pointed out that some years ago there was a Southfields Festival (in Summer and Autumn).

There was a suggestion that Enable facilitate the development of a ‘Gardens trail’ across the borough in collaboration with other Friends groups.

Adoption of aims and Election of committee

The aims of the Friends of Coronation Gardens were agreed without a vote.

The following committee members were appointed:

- Charles Runcie (Pirbright Road) – Chair
- Susannah Perry-Greene (Standen Road) – Vice chair
- Daniel Lund (Pirbright Road) – Treasurer
- Nada Savitch (Standen Road) – Secretary
- Jo Dainow (Standen Road) – Committee member
- Toby Dean (Pirbright Road) – Committee member
- Lesley Ewels (Wimbledon Park Road) – Committee member

- Wendy Cater (Tiffany Height, Standen Road) – Committee member (not present at meeting).

Notes – Nada (4 April 2019)