

Standalone meeting with the Friends Groups and members of the AID Committee and Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee

Thursday 19 October 2023 19:00

In Attendance: Cllrs Neil Coleby, Andy Pearce, John Pitts, Bernie Rappensberger, Elise Youngman and Nick Webb

Friends of Kensington Gardens: Bob Breakspear (Chair)

Friends of Fen Park: Shelley Goddard and Matt Grafton

Officers: Sarah Foote (Deputy Town Clerk) and Taylor Williams (Committee Clerk)

Cllr E Youngman introduced the meeting and thanked the attendees for their work on Lowestoft Town Council (LTC) land. This meeting had been called to receive an update from the Friends Groups on their projects, aspirations and how LTC as the landowners could support their work.

The Friends of Fen Park (FoFP) – The Group needed a new Chair and Treasurer and it was felt that a new Committee would reinvigorate FoFP, ideally allowing them to start work in Spring 2024. It was suggested to have the Deputy Chair to fulfil the role of Chair in the meantime.

The lack of onsite toilets and storage space for tools were a barrier to new members joining, though this should be resolved with the imminent refurbishment of the toilet. The issue of storage space would be discussed by the Assets, Inclusion and Development Committee (AID) in November.

Plans for the future were discussed and the members expressed an interest in planting a new rose garden and installing planters in the park.

FoFP confirmed there had been a sewage leak in the pond ten years ago, which may be a factor of the current issues of discolouration.

Members were notified of a Friends Group Support budget that they could draw from.

Lighting was another issue for the site, to which the Deputy Clerk informed the attendees that a crime report on Fen Park was due to be reviewed by the Community Safety Sub-Committee. Councillors noted that low level lighting would be needed to reduce light pollution and should focus on lighting up the pathways.

The members were reminded that they could request items to be considered by the relevant Committee, whose meetings they could attend as members of the public.

Further suggestions from the members on how to improve the park included a café or mobile unit to serve food and drinks. FoFP would collate their consultations with the public and email them into the office, copying in the Kirkley Councillors.

The Friends of Kensington Gardens (FoKG) – The Chair of the group was concerned that the Council seemed to have no involvement with the grounds maintenance officers working at Kensington Gardens, and the only work carried out in the gardens was by FoKG. The Chair suggested LTC consider employing a gardener for site.

Councillors acknowledged the concerns and suggested this be communicated to the office so that a Personnel agenda item to consider employment of a gardener instead of, or in addition to, the grounds maintenance officers could be discussed. Alternatively, Personnel could consider the professional development of existing officers.

It was acknowledged that this was the first year with grounds maintenance being brought inhouse, and to move forward a site meeting should be arranged at Kensington Gardens with Councillors, officers and FoKG in attendance, with a similar site visit arranged for Fen Park. AID would also consider arranging meetings with the bowls clubs, or a wider sports clubs meeting.

The Chair reported the group has ideas on what to do with the gardens.

There had been an informal approach from the café at Kensington Gardens querying the possibility of signs advertising their business in the park. This could be discussed by the relevant Committee and at the stakeholder meetings.

Cllrs Rappensberger and Newsome could attend FoKG meetings as Town Council representatives and the Chair of FoKG would provide them with the meeting dates.

A memorial request had been received for a former member of FoFP, Richard Jolly. Officers confirmed this had been approved by AID, in principle, and a request further information had been sent to the applicant, though no response has been received to date. FoFP offered to chase this up.

The meeting was closed at 20:06