



Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday 28th July 2011, 7.30pm

Blythe Hill Fields, SE23

Present:- Friends of Blythe Hill Fields members:

Marcel Jenkins (Dep Chair)
Gavin Bolam
Nicholas Taylor

Kylie Barnes (Secretary)
Alan Bailey
Albert Blackmore

Sydney Couldridge
Noelle O'Connor
Jo Ireland

Molly Bertrand
David Byrne

Apologies:-

Josh Smaller

Liz Downie

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

Marcel Jenkins (MJ) opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

2. **Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising**

Filming on Blythe Hill

MJ was very pleased to report that Lewisham Film Office (LFO), the body responsible for all filming in the borough, had passed on a donation of £200 to the Friends from the film producers of a recent Specsavers commercial filmed on Blythe Hill Fields. It was noted that Blythe Hill had been used a number of times recently for filming and there were some reports of issues with parking and noise. Members asked whether the Friends always got donations and whether we should demand fees for using our Hill as a filming location. MJ explained that we didn't always get donations and as we did not own the park we had no basis on which to demand any form of payment. MJ agreed to follow up with the LFO about future projects.

Trees

Damage and disease affecting our new trees are regular issues at members meetings. MJ was sad to report that just after the Festival, he noticed that one of the trees that was actually doing well, had been snapped in half – ironically it was one he had photographed for the Festival display. Sydney Couldridge (SC) mentioned that there were several trees within the playground that are dead too. They were supposed to be replaced last October but they have not yet been done.

3. **Festival – Saturday 2nd July 2011**

MJ was delighted to report that final financial position. Despite receiving a smaller grant from LBL this year, taking all income and expenditure into account, the Friends had delivered a surplus of £1,255, which was a terrific result. All the hard work had paid off - MJ thanked and congratulated everyone involved. There were a number of key reasons for the surplus including better deals with suppliers like Babur, the rides and the stage provider. An extra generator from Jimmy Boton who supplied the rides, saved a useful amount. Income from stalls was up and the new merchandise sales had been very good - all but a few of the mugs were sold though the bags did not sell so well.

There had been an encouraging amount of feedback both verbal and by email. MJ had prepared a digest of the email feedback which was circulated.

4. **Festival Follow Up**

There was an open discussion about things that had gone well in the Festival and what lessons we could learn from things that hadn't been as successful as we'd have hoped.

Donkeys – they had been delivered early, were healthy, were fairly well behaved and were picked up on time. A real change in earlier years. Well done to Jo Ireland for her persistence and commitment. The donkeys were a really key draw for children.

Police Cadets – there was nothing but praise for this band of fantastic young people. The police were also a brilliant addition to the Festival and were a great help on the day. Getting the police horses was a really nice addition. The partnership we have with local police is good and will be useful in the future.

Children's Art Tent – despite having to charge for this, the children's art tent was a great success, being full a lot of the time. The new tent we had purchased was a crucial to being able to provide this activity.

Entertainment – another fantastic line up of local musicians and artists on the main stage, co-ordinated by Molly Bertrand and engineered by her husband Tony. We have always been complemented on the quality and variety of the music and this year had been no exception. It was noticeable that there was much more dancing this year! The traditional Punch & Judy show also continued to be a real draw for the children – something else that sets us apart from other similar summer events in the borough.

Straw Bales – as in previous years, the bales proved crucial in creating the village-y atmosphere on the Fields, which genuinely changed the feel of the space. There were always going to be issues with them breaking down but they would be missed if they weren't there. We were much better prepared this year and were able to clear up most of the mess quickly and effectively.

Volunteers – the advance poster campaign giving clear ideas of the help we needed really paid off and we were overwhelmed by the good will of new people offering to help. It was a great help in the set up but sadly it was the clear up when we also needed the same level of help and it was lacking – leaving a lot more to a lot fewer hands. Perhaps allotting time slots for people to help would be a useful idea for the future.

Stalls – although there were some issues around spacing and allocation of pitches, particularly the positioning of the food stalls, there had been more stalls than in previous years and the quality and variety of stalls was as good as ever. There was good feedback from stallholders who on the whole had a good day and enjoyed the experience. The policy of the sorts of stalls we accept continued to be a strength and was appreciated by stall holders and members of the public. It was agreed that the stall fee needed to go up for next year for most stalls from £20 to £25. It had not been increased since the first festival, five years ago.

For food stalls, there needed to be a tiered system depending on the size/turnover.

Banners and signage – the banner on the stage and the other signs and banners around the site hopefully made it a lot clearer that the Friends' organise this event and it is not a Lewisham Council initiative. The hi-vis stewards jackets also worked well.

Other feedback:

Rides – that the rides were too expensive.

Alcohol – people wanted a drinks tent (Pims, beer etc.) It was generally agreed that no alcohol was a fundamental principle and if people wanted to bring drink they could.

Size – the festival was getting a bit big and needs to be more traditional

Sponsorship

There are local estate agents that can put notices on their boards and it was suggested this would be a good idea for the Festival. It raised money, created partnerships and raises the profile of the Festival to more people.

Mailing List

During the Festival, 86 new people joined the mailing list bringing the total number of subscribers to over 250.

Further Improvements in the park

We discussed what other things we might like to do on the Fields in the future. We had some money in the bank, £3,800 to be exact and needed to have some plans. Ideas that were suggested included: stag beetle loggery, a children's festival day, putting up the bat boxes, barbecue mulled wine for bonfire night and possible social events like quiz nights.

The key issues for the future of the Festival and the Friends were the people that are going to take it forward. The AGM in October would be the chance for new people to volunteer to play a bigger part in the Friends. MJ confirmed he would not be organising the Festival in 2012 and a replacement needed to be found to take the job on.

5. **Next Meetings**

The next meeting and AGM would be held on Thursday 13th October 2011 at the Ackroyd Centre.

MISSION STATEMENT

Friends of Blythe Hill Fields (FBHF) exists to represent everyone living around or using Blythe Hill Fields. Our purpose is to achieve sustainable improvements and facilities in this vital resource for the benefit of the whole community. We aim to promote the increased use and enjoyment of this essential open space.