

FRIENDS OF MILL HILL PARK

Autumn 2012

Circular No 26

An uncertain future

The prospect of privatisation of the parks has revived with the publication of the Council's proposals for the future delivery of services under the title *One Barnet*. Decisions on this plan are due to be taken shortly. It involves the privatisation of a major part of Council services, and although parks are not included in the initial contract it is realistic to expect that they will follow the same path at a later date. Discussion at our 2009 Annual General Meeting, when the question of privatisation of parks was first raised under the title of the *Future Shape of the Council*, showed that members were vehemently opposed, and we exchanged letters with the then Cabinet Member for the Environment, Councillor Andrew Harper, expressing your views. No one believed that services could be delivered by a private provider at a lower cost to the Council without a severe drop in standards. There were many other reasons why the members voted unanimously to oppose the scheme. We received certain assurances from Councillor Harper, at that time, but these probably no longer apply in the current situation.

We await firm proposals relating directly to the parks before campaigning on this issue, but by the time of next year's Annual General Meeting it could again be relevant. There is much that could be said, but we will wait till then. It should be pointed out, however, that the Friends of Mill Hill Park would not have been in a position to obtain lottery funding for the playground, if the park had been privatised, and the desperately needed developments would not have gone ahead.

In the meantime

We are doing our best to see that certain basic amenities are maintained, such as clean and serviceable public toilets, repairs to equipment, and the like. As with other local organisations, however, we are finding lines of communication seem to have broken down – in other words we have not been getting replies to emails and telephone messages have not been passed on. After complaints, these have now been re-established, and we hope to see improvements, particularly to the toilets. Our aim at present is to see that the contractors are fulfilling their obligation to clean these everyday, and to keep them supplied with necessary items, such as soap. Another issue has been the loss of the 'bowl' belonging to one of the new installations in the playground. There have been repeated requests from us during the last six months for a replacement part (without it an important play feature is lacking); we have now had an apology from the contractor, saying that council officers' requests had not been carried out. The 'bowl' is promised with the next few weeks. We are holding back at present on matters such as repair to the hedge bordering Wise Lane, where revenue will have to be found.

In all our efforts we are keeping the local Councillors informed (specifically John Hart and Sury Khatri, as Brian Schama is currently carrying out the duties of Mayor), and have found them helpful in following up matters.

Looking back to 25th March 2012

This was the date of our Playground Launch Party, and it is right that we should devote some space to it. It was an outstanding success, helped by perfect (and unseasonal!) weather on the day. In the Spring Newsletter we promised to express our thanks to all those who sponsored or otherwise contributed to the occasion

Gratitude to our main sponsors, **InLondon Estate Agents**, who provided four marquees for the afternoon, as well as assisting with publicity and providing free toys to hand out at the party, was expressed in our last Newsletter. Here are some of the other organisations and individuals to whom thanks are due.

Other Sponsors

Ocado, *supplied free drinks*; Finchley Nursery, *donated plants and provided a member of staff to guide children in creating a flower bed on the day.*

Organisations participating

Mill Hill Preservation Society, Woodland Trust, RSPB; Rotary, Barnet Dog Training Club, Services: Police, London Fire Brigade, St. John Ambulance Service.

Sports: Whetstone Wanderers; Saracens.

Music: Mill Hill School's Corps of Drums.

Individuals

Dr. Michael Worms, *who led nature walks in the park; an anonymous artist who created (free of charge) the imaginative and colourful design for our publicity flyer.*

Others: Pet Mania, Gymboree, Belmont Farm Zoo.

Finally, thank you to all who answered the call to join the team of **litter pickers**: you did a wonderful job, and the site was in pristine condition at the end of the day. We are very proud of you!

Litter in the park

Reports of problems have been fewer recently, perhaps because the weather has not generally encouraged outdoor events this summer. It is one of our persistent problems, however. One of our committee members has been very impressed with a local initiative, and makes the following suggestion:

"As Council employees are not there every day, we could all 'do our bit' by picking up the odd bottle, sweet wrapper, etc., and popping them in a bin. A good example of this is the footpath from Lawrence Street to Birkbeck Road. There someone has fixed black sacks at each end – and changes them regularly. The path is now the cleanest in Mill Hill. Perhaps we could make our park the cleanest too." **(it is advisable to wear gloves).**

Subscriptions

Renewal forms are attached **only** for those members whose subscription was due in April 2012. Please forward if you can. (You may like to avail yourself of the standing order facility, which means you will not be troubled again!)

Officers

Chairman - John Smith (8959 7138.) Secretary - Jean Smith. Treasurer - Ingrid McKeown,

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