

FRIENDS OF MILL HILL PARK

Spring 2013

Circular No 27

Notice is hereby given that the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will be held on Saturday 6th April 2013 at 10.30 a.m. at the Bowling Club.

Annual General Meeting

The Chairman and Secretary, John and Jean Smith, are standing down this year - as announced at the last AGM - having held these positions for 6 and 9 years respectively. We are fortunate in having had offers from two committee members to stand for election to these offices. In addition, the Treasurer, Ingrid McKeown, will be moving from the district and so we also need a new Treasurer. Would anyone willing to consider taking this on please phone John Smith on 8959 7138.

Our purpose

Our Constitution requires us to work with Barnet Council and other interested bodies to *preserve, protect and enhance* the park. Our ability to continue to carry out our aims is of course influenced by the drastic reduction in resources, both of finance and manpower on the part of the Council in recent years. We depend on the Council's capacity to carry tasks through. Problems of communication were referred to in the last Newsletter, and this is still something to be worked on before we can be fully effective. Regarding the possible threat of future privatisation of the parks, raised in the last Newsletter, Hale Ward Councillor Tom Davey, who is also Cabinet member for Housing, phoned to assure us that Barnet Council has no plans to privatise the parks now or in the future.

Current issues

New contractors will take over responsibility for cleaning public toilets in

all the Borough's parks from the 1st April. Certain deficiencies in equipment remain to be made good, and close monitoring will be required to make sure they fulfil their contract.

It seems that dog fouling, particularly around the Pavilion, is occurring again, so the situation will need to be monitored over the next month or so, so that we have enough evidence to ask for the Priority Intervention Team to be activated again. This was very effective two years ago, when fixed penalty notices were handed out to offenders. (It was also helpful that we had a park keeper then, who did much to encourage good habits among the dog walking public.)

Possible developments

We have been told that the Council is looking to increase the number of toilets by an extension into the Pavilion; there are also plans to provide a fence between the lower area of the playground and the car park. No decision has yet been made on either of these schemes, but we should know shortly if either or both will go ahead. They are both important. The present toilets are very heavily used, and there have been concerns about the proximity of the playground to the car park.

Car parks

The Council is currently carrying out a pre-consultation exercise in relation to the management of car parks in parks. In respect of our park, these include the car park in Daws Lane, as well as the two car parks in the park. The Council says that it is concerned that parking by commuters and Saracens supporters on match days, is preventing visitors to the park from using them. It is proposed to levy charges in all

three car parks seven days a week. We have been asked to give our views on specific proposals, including the number of places and their division between long stay and short stay bays, the proposed free parking period for short stay bays and the maximum stay period. We are also asked for our opinion on the proposed pricing structure.

In our response we have referred to the two previous attempts to introduce charge in the Daws Lane car park. In 2000 and 2003 surveys carried out by the Mill Hill Residents' Association on those occasions showed that no more than 18% of cars parked could be attributed to commuters. It was used mainly by people who work in shops and other business in Mill Hill. This is not surprising as the Broadway and the rest of Mill Hill on that side of the Barnet Way is a CPZ. There is no evidence of any change since 2003. Further, the Saracens matches have so far had no noticeable effect on our car parks.

We have provided numbers of cars parked in the areas by the Wise lane entrance, which show that there are usually spaces free during the working week days. The Daws Lane car park has a majority of spaces free at weekends.

Therefore we have replied that these proposals to stop parking by non park users to deter them from preventing parking by visitors to the park, is attempt to deal with a problem that does not exist.

The introduction of parking charges would put Barnet Council in breach of a covenant by the then Hendon District Council in 1927, that the land (which includes the Daws Lane car park) would be used as an open space for public use and recreation in perpetuity. Charging, particularly for the long stay bays at £5 all day – the same as the station car park – would amount to the **provision** of parking for commuters, not a deterrent, and would clearly be a breach of the covenant.

If, despite what we have said, charging was introduced, we have said that there should be no charge on Saturdays or

Sundays, that the proposed 1 hour free parking period should be extended to 2 hours. The Council proposes more long stay than short stay places and we have said there should be more short-stay places and fewer long stay.

We also questioned whether the cost of enforcement would result in the Council losing out financially. Now we must wait and see if a formal consultation is pursued. If it is, there will no doubt be vigorous local opposition.

Subscriptions

Rates were changed last year to an annual subscription, so most members will receive a renewal notice with this Newsletter. Those who do not are among the lucky ones whose subscription under the previous system does not expire until 2014/15. Alternately, you may be among the select few who have opted to pay by standing order. We would be very happy if more people could opt for this method of payment – it means a one off transaction for members, and it certainly makes life easier for the Treasurer! Membership has increased during the last two years, and we do not want to lose anyone because paying an annual subscription becomes onerous.

Finally: come to the AGM, if you can, and let us have your views on car parks or any other topic relating to Mill Hill Park.

We are very pleased that Councillor John Hart has agreed to attend and answer questions during the open session.

Tea and coffee will be served, as usual, before the meeting.

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