

Friends of Chislehurst Recreation Ground

Registered Charity Number 1163405

**ANNUAL REPORT 2020 -21**

**Structure, Governance and Management**

The Friends of Chislehurst and Walden Recreation Grounds, also known as FOCRG, was established in 2010 and became a charity on 3 September 2015. It is governed by its Constitution, most recently amended 30 July 2015. The charity’s principal objective is to assist in maintaining and improving Chislehurst & Walden recreation grounds and associate community facilities for the benefit of the inhabitants of the area with the object of improving their conditions of life. Funds are raised through grants, events and by encouraging donations from local people and businesses. We rely on this funding and volunteers to provide free community events and park improvements. The Trustees of the Charity are the committee:

**Chair** Barbara Arora **Social media & marketing**  Pia Burbidge

**Secretary** Alison Stammers **Gardening Club** Mai Bunce

Gary Tyler

**Treasurer** Julie Covill **Consultant engineer & factotum** Ian Douglas

**Events** Rachelle Harte **Member without portfolio** Clive Richardson

**Objectives and Activities**

The charity’s principal objective is to assist in maintaining and improving Chislehurst & Walden Recreation Grounds and associate community facilities for the benefit of the inhabitants of the area with the object of improving their conditions of life. Funds are raised through grants, events and by encouraging donations from local people and businesses. We rely on this funding and volunteers to provide free community events and park improvements.

**Achievements and Performance**

Our financial year began with the run up to a second COVID-19 lockdown. The pandemic was far from coming under control and the uncertainty had prevented us from planning any events. Chislehurst Rocks, our major community event, normally held in June, was put on hold for a second year. The committee continued to meet virtually by Zoom and established a very useful WhatsApp group for rapid communication. Our Social media channels continued to be used for information about safe, socially distanced use of the Recreation Grounds and to encourage people to enjoy their natural surroundings for the benefit of both physical and mental health.

The Committee members and other volunteers continued to deal with essential maintenance tasks e.g. sanitizing the water fountain, tending planters and litter picking, all of which could be done alone, or in socially distanced safe bubbles. We also continued to work on projects to improve biodiversity.

With support from idVerde, the park management company, we obtained agreement for a “No Mow” area in Walden Recreation Ground. In July, aided by the Chislehurst 1st Guides, we did a baseline survey of the wildflower and grass species. A second, smaller area was also left in Chislehurst Recreation Ground to form a “Hedgehog Highway” linking with the Scout Compound. Social media was used to inform and educate about the importance of these areas.

Drainage in Chislehurst Recreation Ground remains a problem and FOCRG continued to lobby idVerde and London Borough of Bromley for improved ditch maintenance. A group of volunteers actually dug out a section of an old drainage ditch to prove that it could help retain rain water and prevent it flooding the playground and football pitch.

Once the lockdown was relaxed, the Gardening Club resumed its regular Wednesday work parties, followed by socially distanced chat and refreshments near their new shed in the Scout compound. Their membership continues to grow and the core team of 12 volunteers have achieved a huge amount. Planters and borders are well tended and a row of hawthorn trees was planted in Chislehurst Recreation Ground. They endeavor to choose plants suitable for coping with climate change and benefits to pollinators. The shed has been equipped with two water butts. The Chislehurst 5th Cubs continued to help with the Shade Garden on occasional Saturdays. Local Brownies and Rainbows also helped with planting wildflowers and bulbs.

Our efforts were rewarded by receiving Outstanding for the 5th year running in the It’s your Neighbourhood Category of the London in Bloom awards. An additional National Certificate of Distinction from the Royal Horticultural Society was also won, plus a bronze award for our first entry in the London in Bloom Environmental Challenge. Although the judging this year was in person, the awards ceremony was a virtual event. However, we were able to celebrate with tea and cakes while watching on the big screen in the Roost – our first proper opportunity to thank volunteers since lockdowns.

Events earlier in the year had been virtual due to pandemic restrictions. In February, to coincide with half term, we organised Chislehurst Cheer. Local residents were invited to decorate their windows with illuminated pictures. We decorated the window of the Roost café in Chislehurst Rec. Locations were included in an online map which families could follow as part of their daily lockdown walks. It was very successful with many imaginative windows and a lot of positive feedback.

For the Easter holidays, we ran a competition for Easter themed crafts made from recycled materials.

Working in partnership with idVerde we retained our Green Flag status for a fifth year.

FOCRG are pleased to see the greatly increased appreciation of parks and open spaces, started during the Covid pandemic lockdowns, has persisted. Our recreation grounds continue to be busy with both regular visitors and many newcomers. We continue to work with other Friends Groups through Bromley Friends Forum and have good links with the Bromley Biodiversity Panel.

**Funding**

Cancellation of events once again meant limited opportunities for fund raising but we continued to look for grant funding opportunities. We were fortunate in being awarded £12089 from the Post Code Lottery and £10,706 from the Chislehurst Society. These grants enabled us to provide 5 additional benches, a picnic table and a sheltered seating area, which had been asked for repeatedly during lockdowns. A further £1596 was awarded by the Lottery Main Grants Fund in recognition of the Gardening Club’s potential to reduce social isolation. It will be used to fund more equipment and also refreshments to reward volunteers and enhance the social aspects of the Club. A further grant of £1000 was awarded by the Arnold Clark Automotive Trust Fund for a project involving recycling. Donations continue to be received for use of the table tennis equipment and small sums are received when supporters make purchases through Amazon Smile and Easy Fund Raising.

The Gardening Club sold second hand books donated by Rec users to raised funds for plants and equipment.

Additional benefits for the Recreation Grounds have been received “in kind” by donations of building and landscaping materials from supporters.

**Membership**

Membership of FOCRG currently stands at 593 households, 880 members. People do seem to appreciate our efforts to make the Recreation Grounds a safe and pleasant environment, but the number of actual volunteers remains low. We have a committee of 8 plus a further 8-10 regular volunteers who can be called upon for projects.

Despite Covid-19 restrictions, FOCRG including the Gardening Club, contributed an amazing total of 1849.1 hours to protect, promote and improve our Recreation Grounds.

**For the future**

Moving forward, we will continue to develop gardening and biodiversity projects and hopefully grow our regular volunteer base by widening the range of activities. Covid restrictions permitting, we will also start hosting some smaller, family events. The first will be a Gingerbread House event in collaboration with the Invicta Scout Group. In spring 2022 we are planning a family fun dog show and in June we hope to participate in the national beacon event to mark HM The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee.

**Financial Review**

During the year ended 2 September 2021, FOCRG received £24,948. Total resources expended £12,834.

Net Incoming/(outgoing) Resources £12,114

The financial statements are set out on pages ?? Of the independent examiners report on page ?. The independent examiner is Mattison & Co.

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees’ report above,



Barbara Arora

Chair FOCRG 8th November 2021

**Appendix. Volunteer Hours**

**Work parties**:  **905.6 hours**

* Regular weekly Gardening Club plus individuals working alone during lockdown
* Chislehurst 5th Cubs Saturday work mornings x 2
* Remembrance Poppies for wreath and gate.

**Events hours 77 hours**

* **Chislehurst Cheer**
* **Easter Crafts**
* **London in Bloom Awards**

**Other activities: 866.5 hours**

Committee meetings, site meetings with idVerde, LBB, interaction with other organisations including Friends Forum, Chislehurst Society, Invicta Scout Group, Chislehurst 5th Cubs, Chislehurst 1st Guide group;

Emails, telephone calls, administrative tasks including grant applications, book keeping, Charity commission documentation, policy writing, social media and website maintenance, research and design for campaigns,, posters etc.

Regular,ongoing activities, Maintenance of drinking fountain, Litter picking, provision of dog poo bags

**Total volunteer hours 1849.1 hours**