

FRIENDS OF 'THE PARK' START UP PACK



GUIDANCE NOTES FOR STARTING A FRIENDS GROUP



Leicester
City Council

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INTRODUCTION

This pack has been put together as a set of guidelines for members of the community to work with Leicester City Council and set up their own "Friends of" groups, assisting to enhance and promote the use of parks and green spaces within Leicester.

For many years local communities have felt as though their local park or green space has been neglected and they have been unable to do anything about it. Setting up a group gives all members of the community the chance to develop their local park or green space in line with the needs of the community. Being a "Friend" is an excellent way of providing facilities or events and activities for your local community. Although this is sometimes hard work the rewards are more than worth the effort.

This pack explains the basic stages of starting up a group, organising your first meeting, sources of funding which may be of use in reaching your groups aims and objectives and finally a list of useful contacts. If you do feel you need any help or would like answers to ask any questions please do not hesitate to contact your local parks officer. They will be able to put you in contact with other "Friends of" groups who may have similar experiences when starting up.

Please contact:

Write: Parks Services
 Leicester City Council
 Park House
 Abbey Park
 Abbey Park Road
 Leicester
 LE4 5AQ

Tel: 0116 2527003

Email: parks@leicester.gov.uk

Web: www.leicester.gov.uk/parks

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STARTING A GROUP

Setting up a "friends of" group takes four stages. Perhaps the most difficult stage is the first, which consists of finding like minded individuals who want to become involved in a voluntary group. Stages 2 and 3 that follow should be carried out at the first meeting of the group. Finally stage 4 should be completed after the first AGM.

Stage 1 - (Getting together) As mentioned above, this can seem like the most difficult and daunting stage to tackle, don't panic! Your local parks officer will be happy to lend a hand. Most groups tend to advertise an informal gathering where interested parties can get a feel for what the group aims to do. The main aim of this stage is to gather as much interest in your potential group as possible, speak to your parks officer because they may have contacts in the community who would like to become involved with such a group. Your group will generally find that there are many people in the local community who have an opinion about the park or green space in question. Part of the work of a "Friends of" group is to take on these views and opinions and relay them back into the development and management plans for the park. These will also make up part of the constitution as AIMS and OBJECTIVES.

Stage 2 - (Brain Storming) This is the second stage which would consist of mulling over ideas/issues and aims of the groups and also an opportunity to identify the members who have skills, interest and enthusiasm as part of the decision making process.

Stage 3 - The third stage consists of choosing a constitution. A constitution basically explains how your group will be managed, from the aims and objectives of the group through to how meetings are to be run. The constitution of your group does not have to be complicated but it should reflect how you wish your group to be managed. Your group does not have to start from scratch when deciding on a constitution, parts of other groups' constitutions can be used. (A copy of a groups' constitution have been included in this pack). Your group will probably have a copy of a constitution they wish to adopt, however the group need to formally adopt it at the AGM. To adopt the Constitution the group has to agree upon it and the committee has to sign it.

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STARTING A GROUP (cont)

Stage 4 - The fourth stage consists of electing a committee, depending on the constitution you have adopted will depend on the criteria included for your committee. A committee should consist of a chairperson, treasurer, secretary and at least 3 other members. The 3 other members do not have to take up a specific role, however other groups have chosen to elect vice positions, such as vice chairperson, vice treasurer and vice secretary. Anyone can elect another member to a position, however it must be decided by vote who is to take a position. It is possible for individuals to act as chairperson and secretary whilst organising the first AGM, but they must give up their position when the committee are to be elected.

At this stage you may also wish to set up a bank account, any account set up for the group should be set up in the name of the group with at least 2 signatories for the account. The signatories must be members of the committee, usually the chairperson and the treasurer. Other groups have chosen to have 3 signatories on the account, therefore if one member of the committee is unavailable, another can sign in their place. An account with a cheque book is essential for easy access to the group's funds.

After these stages are complete you will be a fully constituted group with a committee and a bank account, the next stage is to start working towards your groups aims and objectives.

If you would like any further information on any of the above, please contact your parks officer who will either be able to help, or will be able to put you in contact with someone who can help.

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SETTING UP YOUR FIRST MEETING

Setting up your first meeting can seem quite complicated if you have never done anything similar before. Below are some guidelines that should remind you of the small things that it is so easy to forget.

Where should we hold the meeting? - The meeting should be organised in a facility that is local to your park or open space, and as open and accessible to as many community members as possible. Remember that there will be a range of people attending your meeting including older age people, parents of young children and possibly wheel chair users. Facilities such as schools, churches and community rooms are commonly used as meeting places as they usually offer toilets, parking and easy access to the building. If your local park or green space has a building speak to your parks officer about using this facility.

When should we hold the meeting? - Give yourself at least 3 weeks to organise your first meeting, this will give interested parties the chance to make arrangements so that they can attend your meeting. Your meeting should be organised at a time when most people in the community are able to attend, late afternoon/evening meetings are good because they allow community members who work to attend the meetings. Following meetings can be held at whatever times suit the majority of your group best.

Who should we invite? - As a community group you need to involve as many people as possible, therefore your meeting should be advertised as much as possible. Word of mouth is the best form of advertising, however posters and leaflets are also beneficial if they are put in the right place. Schools, shops, clubs and the park itself are great places to put advertising for your meeting. Some groups also choose to invite their local councillors, if you do not have a contact for them your parks officer will be able to provide the link. Parks staff or a manager will always be happy to attend your meetings where possible.

What do we need to do? - All meetings held by your group should have an agenda (what is to be included in the meeting) and all meetings should be minuted. Minutes do not have to be a complete copy of everything that is said in the meeting, they should reflect the major themes that are discussed in the meetings with any action points marked against a name. Minutes should also record the names of the people who have attended and any apologies sent for the meeting. Sample agendas and minutes are included within this pack.

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APPLYING FOR FUNDING

When applying for funding it is really important that the funder you apply to is willing to give funds for projects similar to yours. For example, it would not be advisable to apply for an environmental grant if you wanted to set up a sports project. By reading through the information provided with the funding application you will be able to work out what the funder is willing to give money for.

To help fill in your application please bear the following points in mind:

- 1) Photocopy the application first, you can fill the photocopy in without worrying about any mistakes.
- 2) Don't be too extravagant with your first bid, it is better to apply for smaller amounts of money when you first begin. Funders like to see experience of dealing with money and projects before they offer you a large sum of money.
- 3) Make a list of the funder's aims and objectives and make statements about how your project will reach these aims and objectives.
- 4) Funders like projects which meet the needs of local people, if you have completed a piece of consultation that shows that your project will meet these needs try to refer to it in the application.
- 5) Funders also like to fund projects which include more than one group or organisation, refer to the fact that you work in partnership with Leicester City Council and any other groups or organisations such as the Police.
- 6) Before filling out the application make sure that you have a full project proposal that covers how the project will be managed. Funders like to give money to groups who are well organised and would be ready to start the project as soon as the money is available.
- 7) Try not to ramble, include everything that you feel you need to write but write it in the shortest way possible.

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- 8) Make sure you include any match funding you have received. Equipment, facilities or volunteer time given in kind can be classed as match funding.
- 9) Make a check list of any extra information other than the application form, which needs to be returned to the funder, such as a constitution or financial records. Tick each item as you put it in the envelope.
- 10) If you are not successful with your first bid, don't give up, try and try again! Some funders will give you an explanation of why you were not successful if you request it in writing.
- 11) Try to get a copy of a successful application for that funder, this will show you what kind of things the funders are looking for. Many friends groups apply to the same funders so another "friends of" group may be able to offer you some help.
- 12) Finally, remember that the Parks Services team are always available to help and support your group and can offer start up grants of up to £500 for new Friends groups.

Some useful funding contacts

Leicester City Council's Ward Community Meetings may be able to offer small grants to start up and support Friends of Groups. Contact your local councillor for advice. The councils' website also contains a list of funders.

www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council--services/lc/grants

The East Midlands Funding index is designed to provide a snapshot of funders that will support community based projects and initiatives that are delivered within the East Midlands region.

www.fundersindex.co.uk/

The Leicestershire Funding Toolkit has been developed to provide one-stop access to advice and information on funding for voluntary and community organisations in Leicester and Leicestershire.

www.fundingtoolkit.org/

Lottery Funding is a joint website run by all Lottery funders in the UK.

This site allows you to search information on current funding programmes across the UK

www.lotteryfunding.org.uk/

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SAMPLE AGENDA

An agenda does not have to be complicated. It should simply reflect what the group wish to cover in the meeting.

The agenda below is an example of how an agenda could be set out and what it could contain. It is completely fictional and is not linked to any "friends of" group.

**AGENDA
FRIENDS OF *****
20th OCTOBER 2004, 6.30PM
HELD AT THE PARK PAVILLION**

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies
2. Progress since last meeting
3. Consultation
4. Funding applied for
5. A.O.B. (any other business)
6. Date and time of next meeting
7. Close

An agenda for an AGM would be slightly different because it would have to include a financial report for the year and election of the committee, it could also include guest speakers and a progress report from the committee.

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SAMPLE MINUTES

**MINUTES OF MEETING
FRIENDS OF ***** GROUP MEETING
20th OCTOBER 2004, 6.30PM
HELD AT THE PARKS PAVILLION**

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies.

Hugo First	Friends of *****
Bob Frapples	Friends of *****
Dee Compose	Friends of *****
Chris Mass	Friends of *****
Abby Birthday	Friends of *****
Percy Park-Keeper	Leicester City Council
P.C. Plod	Police
P.C.S.O. Smith	Police

Apologies received Faye Kinnet, Terry Dactill and Justin Case

2. Progress since last meeting

Bob said that group had run a community litter pick on Saturday 12th that had attracted more than 20 volunteers who collected a large amount of litter from the park.

Dee and Chris had successfully sourced some spring flowering bulbs to go in the grass banks along the edge of the park and wanted to thank the store that supplied them for free.

Action - Dee will organise a day for the planting, volunteers needed.

A team of youths has been registered with the MAD scheme. They are working together at the moment to identify a project that they are interested in.

Action - Percy to work with the team to give support and ideas.

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3. Consultation

The last draft of the questionnaire has been completed, consultation has been planned to take place at the forthcoming fun day.

Action - Justin Case to collect names of volunteers for consultation at the forthcoming fun day.

It was also suggested by Percy that the Youth Workers may be able to help carry out questionnaires.

Action - Percy to liaise with youth workers

4. Funding Applied For

Hugo has received the applications for Awards for All. The group discussed that funding for the Easter celebrations or Easter half term sports coaching could be applied for. It was decided that the Awards for All money should be used for the Easter half term sports coaching.

Action - Dee to fill in the Awards for All application, Bob to give support where needed.

5. A.O.B. (any other business)

Terry enquired about the park closing times over the next few weeks. Percy explained that the park closes at dusk every night.

Action - Percy to put poster on main gates with the approximate closing time for the park.

6. Date and time of next meeting

Next meeting will be 22nd November 2004, 6.30pm at The Parks Bowling Pavilion.

7. Close

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SAMPLE CONSTITUTION

Below is an example of a constitution, feel free to use any ideas you may gain from it. Again the constitution can be as simple or as complicated as you like. If you would like more sample constitutions contact your Parks Officer who will be more than happy to help.

CONSTITUTION

Adopted on theDay of.....

A. Name

The name of the group is "The friends ofPark"

AIM

To promote the use of Park and it's historical, ecological and horticultural values.

B. OBJECTIVES

The group's objectives are:

1. To assist with current and developing projects that will improve the Park.
2. To raise funds to ensure sustainability of the group.
3. To encourage wider community participation in improving the park.
4. Establish an acceptable balance between the needs of dog owners and the needs of other park users.

MEMBERSHIP

1. **Membership shall be open** to any person who has an interest in the park. However, Councillors and Council officers are not permitted to vote or stand for committee positions of the group.

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Any body, corporate or unincorporated association, which is interested in furthering the groups work, subject to agreement by the executive committee.

2. Every member shall have one vote

The executive committee will consist of a Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and up to two other executive members (drawn from the associate membership)

The committee may unanimously and for good reason terminate the membership of any individual, provided the individual's concerned case has been heard by the committee before a final decision can be made. The individual has the right to be accompanied by a friend.

MEETINGS

The inaugural General Meeting will be held in2008 followed by an Annual General Meeting in or about of every subsequent year.

There will be a minimum of four ordinary meetings of the Association each year, the timing of which will be decided by the Executive Committee.

Special General meetings of the Association shall be held at the written request of 25 per cent or more members or by the Officers of the Association.

The Executive Committee shall give at least 21 days notice to members of the Annual General Meeting each year and at least 7 days notice of other meetings.

In the event of equality in the votes cast at an Annual General Meeting or Special General meeting the motion will fall.

The AGM will from time to time consider and approve standing orders for the conduction of meetings and financial regulations. There is a policy on conduct at all meetings.

RECEIPTS/EXPENDITURE

1. The funds of the group, including all donations, contributions and bequests, shall be paid into an account operated by the committee in the name of the group at such a bank, as the committee shall from time to time decide. All cheques drawn on the account must be signed by at least two members of the executive committee.

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2. The funds belonging to the group shall be applied only in furthering the aims and objectives.

AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended by a 2/3rds majority of the members voting at an Annual General Meeting or Special General Meeting of the Association confirmed by a simple majority of the members voting at a further Special General Meeting held not less than 28 days after the previous meeting, providing that at both meetings the majority of those present and voting are residents of the local neighbourhood.

If a motion for dissolution of the Association is to be proposed at an Annual General Meeting or a Special General meeting this motion shall be referred to specifically when notice of the meeting is given.

In the event of dissolution of the Association the available funds of the Association shall be transferred to another body with similar objectives.

Adopted by:

Name:

Committee Role:

Signature:

Date:

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WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

The council is committed to supporting and helping to develop "Friends of Parks" groups. In order to achieve this, periodically interactive workshops will be held to help support groups. These workshops will help in tackling issues and raising awareness and sharing good practice.

Key elements are as follows:

- Volunteering
- Events & Activities
- Fundraising