

Friends of Spencer Park
Minutes of meeting Monday May 20th.

Present: Paul Smith, Zilpha Reed, Karen Berry, Esther Higden, Fiona Pashazadeh, Helen Elias

Apologies: Tim Brooke

1. **Rob Wheway**, an independent play consultant had been invited to the meeting to comment on plans for the play area in Spencer Park. Helen had previously circulated a summary of the history of our bids and details of the current quotes. Rob referred to these and to the photos we had taken of play areas around Coventry.
 - He said that his research had shown that the most crucial factor in the amount of playing out that children were able to do was the volume of traffic. There are no streets with light traffic use in our area where children can play out so a park is essential.
 - Rob spoke about safety surfaces. He said that grass grids are OK in low impact areas but not where they are used a lot eg next to slides. He said that we should check out if the Durasport grass carpet is sand filled– it would therefore be fire resistant and hard wearing. We should ask for a test certificate for fall heights. If equipment is less than 600mm high tarmac or concrete under it is OK At 1 metre height grass or earth is sufficient. Some artificial surface might be needed at the ends of equipment to prevent muddy areas forming.
 - He also said that we should look at site lines. Parks are more likely to be used if they are open to view so the hedges need to be lower. Children do not like dense copses, preferring small clumps of trees and bushes to hide behind.
 - He was concerned about older children congregating around the younger children's playground if there was nothing for them on the recreation ground.
 - He said if we had tunnels installed they should be on a slope to make for easier cleaning so that rainwater could run through them.
 - Rob felt that we should only go for boulders and tree trunks if they happened available cheaply from the council as otherwise they are very expensive. Purpose built balancing beams would be better. A wobble beam would not be suitable for young children – a plain fixed one would be more appropriate and cheaper.
 - Rob asked if the paths round the area would be redone by the council. If so, road markings could be put on them.
 - He said that it is good to have two cradle swings together so carers can socialise while pushing the swings. He said that circular swings are popular and that in general shared equipment is better than too many individual items. Eg a see-saw or roundabout rather than spicas which don't wear well. He said that trampolines are popular and safe but can fill up with rubbish.
 - Imaginative play areas such as pirate ships and houses are popular. The theme needs to be specific so children know what they are play on, rather than too airy fairy.

- He finished by saying that playgrounds should appeal to a variety of ages and the equipment be suitable for multi use.
The group thanked him for coming. He is willing to advise us in the future.
2. **Consultation** Karen has processed 163 forms on the computer and has about 20 more to do. She has included comments. Helen and Karen are going into Earlsdon School on June 20th to talk to the school council and Year 4 so will get some more opinions about park provision. The posters will be on display and more consultation will take place at the Big Lunch and Bands in the Park.
 3. **Gardening** The next session will be June 8th. 10 – 12. The Council should be more available to assist with Spencer Park after May 31st when they will have completed their bid for Green Flag status for the Memorial Park. Zilpha will ask them to remove the snowberries before June 8th so we can plant out. We need to weed the south west border. Other sessions, which will be posted on the web site will be Weds. June 5th 7.30, Tues June 18th 7.30, Sat July 13th 10 – 12, Weds July 24th 7.30 and Sat Aug 17th 10 – 12
 4. **Update on Funding** Karen has been told by the Community Police that there is a fund available of up to £99 which could be used to provide a notice board by the Dalton Road entrance. She has not had much luck with finding sources of the required WREN matched funding of £5500 as circulated in her previous email. The Council Funding desk was not optimistic. The matched funding needs to be one sum. Heart of England will only go up to £2500. Karen is going to approach Ces Edwards to see if some of the funding earmarked for the park could be used for this. She will also ask if to clarify whether the council will, after clearing the site, put down a base layer on which safety surfaces, tarmac or soil and turf could be laid on directly. Paul asked if we should consider setting up as a charity as more funding seems to be available with that status. He will look into this.
 5. **Update on Real Challenge** Karen will be meeting with the team on Monday August 19th 10-45 to 12.30 at Barrs Hill School and would welcome anyone else who can attend. Michelle, the Ranger team leader will be attending. The risk assessment process is going ahead. A marquee is needed for games on Sept 7th. We are receiving £125 for hosting the event which will cover the cost of the marquee.
 6. **Minutes of the meeting on April 29th**. These were accepted with two corrections from Helen. The area to be gardened was not by Dalton Rd but in the south west corner. In section 5 Headier should have read as header. Paul said that the web site was being well used. Karen has organized bowling at the Big Lunch from 1 – 3 and also tennis.
 7. **Next meeting** Monday June 3rd 7.30 at Zilpha's house (Paul will raise the issue of parking and road safety at the next NENA meeting).

Helen Elias 21.5.13