

Amber Valley Borough Council

Making Great Parks with Friends' Groups

Guiding Principles

The Council has adopted the Standards for England's 'Partnership Behaviour Protocol', the values and behaviours of which also apply to these Guiding Principles.

Great parks improve many aspects of people's lives - helping to improve health, providing safe places for children to play and learn, increasing both the environmental and economic value of an area and providing space for wildlife. We manage parks efficiently and effectively but welcome the involvement of as many users as possible. Citizens are encouraged to respect their environment and be good neighbours. These principles guide our relationship with Friends' Groups - voluntary groups of local residents, workers or visitors who dedicate some of their time, energy and effort to caring for and improving their local park to help us all make it great.

What we are doing to make a difference

- Managing parks well.
- Consulting with the local community and Friends' Groups in the planning and improvement of parks, including any local management plan.
- Reviewing each local management plan regularly and asking the relevant Friends' Group for comments and ideas for the following years.
- Encouraging the active involvement of Friends' Groups in parks, recognising the potential diversity of skills, knowledge and experience of their members.
- Helping to establish a Friends' Group, on the understanding that it is seeking to be self-sustaining, i.e. requiring minimal support from the Council.
- Maintaining communication with Friends' Groups and keeping them informed of significant decisions or actions affecting the park and/or its users.
- Working with other agencies to secure additional funding and improvements.
- Understanding the aims of each Friends' Group.
- Supporting within reason any approved activity in the park by a Friends' Group.

What Friends' Groups can do to help us to make a difference

- Fundraising for improvements and events.
- Enhancing biodiversity (e.g. creation of wildflower meadows, installing bird and bat boxes).
- Practical tasks like clean-ups and tree planting.
- Improving access, including purchasing and installing benches.
- Responding to Council consultations constructively.
- Leading walks and talks.
- Producing leaflets and other educational material, including documenting and exhibiting the heritage.

- Regenerating a neglected, negative and underused space.
- Protecting the natural beauty.
- Improving safety, by working with us and other agencies to put a stop to antisocial behaviour.
- Increasing public awareness of proposed alterations to the park.
- Working with us in looking to the long term regeneration and development of the park.
- Over time, aiming to be self-sustaining, with reduced support from us. We need to encourage new Friends' Groups in other areas of the Borough and redirect our limited resources to other major landscape development projects.
- Recognising that budgets can be limited and the importance of focusing on the main elements of the local management plan.
- Asking us first about any proposed activity within the park and not proceeding until we have given our approval. We will seek to reply as quickly as we can to avoid delay.

Valuing each other

Together we should:

- Develop an effective working relationship, avoiding close personal familiarity*.
- Support and treat each other courteously, with dignity and respect.
- Have constructive dialogue, sharing ideas and views.
- Attempt to see things from the other's point of view.
- Provide objective, competent advice to each other.
- Give a timely response to enquiries and complaints and appropriate follow-up.
- Have inclusive community engagement structures that ensure under-represented groups have the opportunity to participate.

*Close personal familiarity between officers of the Council and members of a Group can damage the relationship and prove embarrassing to others and should therefore be avoided. Officers should always remember their responsibilities to the communities they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within the community, as defined by the policies of the Council.

What happens if we don't agree?

As in any relationship there may be times when we don't see eye to eye. We should however continue to show each other respect, continue talking to each other, acting rationally to find a compromise.

You can seek help from your local Borough Councillor.

You can, as a last resort, raise the issue under the Council's Customer Comments Procedure at <http://www.ambervalley.gov.uk/services/governmentpoliticsandpublicadministration/localgovernment/councilcontactsandfeedback/complimentsandcomplaintscouncil/>

Other useful documents (available to view on the Council's website)
Amber Valley Borough Council - Local Code of Corporate Governance
Amber Valley Borough Council - Code of Practice for Partnerships.
Standards for England's 'Partnership Behaviour Protocol'