



MANCHESTER  
CITY COUNCIL

# **'FRIENDS OF PARK' START UP PACK**

Guidance notes for starting a Friends group

August 2013  
Community and Cultural Services

Together. We are Manchester

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## **INTRODUCTION**

**Manchester City Council supports local communities to take care of and develop their local park or green space by assisting the setting up of friends groups**

**Friends Groups gives residents the opportunity to take a lead role in the development, care and ownership of key community assets.**

This advice pack has been put together to help you set up your own group to work along side the City Council.

Being a “friend” is an excellent way of providing facilities, 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 AGM, suggests sources of funding which may be of use, and finally a list of useful contacts.

If you do feel you need any help or would like to ask any questions please contact us,

Contact the team directly using the feedback form or alternatively, you can contact us: - using the details below.

**Telephone:** 0161 234 5000

**Email:** [contact@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:contact@manchester.gov.uk)

**Post:**

Manchester City Council  
Town Hall  
Albert Square  
MANCHESTER  
M60 2LA

## **STARTING A GROUP**

If you are thinking of setting up a friends group, as a first step find out if there is a group already set up (see link below), if there isn't a existing group then the council will be able to support you in setting up your group and may be able to help with resources such as meeting rooms.

To help you decide if setting up a group is for you this simple guide takes you through the basic steps you need to take:

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 AGM (Annual General Meeting) of the group. Finally stage 4 should be completed after the first AGM.

([http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200101/voluntary\\_organisations/872/friends\\_of\\_the\\_park/2](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200101/voluntary_organisations/872/friends_of_the_park/2))

## Stage 1

This can seem like the most difficult and daunting stage to tackle, don't panic!

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, a Neighbourhood officer will be able to support you to advertise your meeting, the Neighbourhood Officer will also be able to advise you on suitable venues, and give you access to park buildings or Library meeting rooms.

Your group will generally find that there are many people in the local community who have an opinion about the park or open space in question. Part of the work of a "friends of" group is to take on these views and opinions and work together with the City Council to make this happen.

- **To be carried out at the first AGM \***

## Stage 2

The second stage consists of choosing a constitution. (We have a model )

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.

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 have to agree upon it and the committee have to sign it.

- **To be carried out after the first AGM \***

### **Stage 3**

The third 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 5 other members. The 5 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 takes 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.

### **Stage 4**

The fourth stage is 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 and should not be directly related (partners, sister/brothers).

It is a good idea 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 chequebook is essential for easy access to the group's funds.

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

You can get advice on choosing a bank and applying for an account from:

**M.A.C.C** - <http://www.macc.org.uk/>

Macc is the voluntary and community sector support organisation for the city of Manchester

## **SETTING UP YOUR FIRST AGM**

Setting up your first AGM 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 Libraries schools, churches and community rooms are commonly used as meeting places as they usually offer toilets, tea making equipment, parking and easy access to the building. If your local park or open space has a building speak to your Delivery Officer about using this facility or use of your local library.

### **When should we hold the meeting?**

Give yourself at least 3 weeks to organise your first AGM, this will give interested people 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/early 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. Libraries 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; the council will be able to put support putting posters in park notice board and in local libraries.

### **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 which 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.**

## **APPLYING FOR FUNDING**

When applying for funding it is really important that the funding body you apply to is willing to give funds for projects similar to yours. For example, it would not be advisable to apply for an environment grant if you wanted to set up a sports project. By reading through the information provided with the 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 funding body'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 Manchester City Council and any other groups or organisations such as GMP.
- 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.
- 8.** Make sure you include any match funding you have received. Equipment, facilities or staff given in kind can be classed as match funding, speak to your Delivery Officer to get a cost for these items.
- 9.** Make a checklist of any extra information other than the application form that 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 Delivery Officer team are always available to offer help and support to your group.

## **Funding Sources**

There are many sources of funding which your group will be able to apply for.

**NB. Some of these will be out-of date by the time you read this as funding streams change constantly. For current sources of funding, please check with your council.**

Below are some of the grants sources that are commonly used by “Friends of” groups.

**Awards for All** – This is a lottery based grants scheme that is aimed at local communities. They award grants of between £500 and £5,000 in a simple and straightforward way. They can fund projects that enable people to take part in art, sport, heritage and community activities, as well as projects that promote education, the environment and health in the local community. For more information or an application form, contact 0845 600 2040 or <http://www.awardsforall.org.uk/>.

**CAS:H Grants** -This is a grant scheme organised by Manchester City Council aimed at making areas cleaner and safer. They award grants of various sizes throughout the year for community led initiatives that result in a cleaner, greener and safer environment. For more information or an application form please contact – [contact@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:contact@manchester.gov.uk)

**Forever Manchester** - Forever Manchester runs a number of grant programmes, and they may also be able offer advice on bank accounts.  
<http://forevermanchester.com/apply-for-funding/>

**The Manchester Airport Community Trust Fund** - A registered charity and was established to promote, enhance, improve and protect both the natural and built environment in our local community. The Trustees award grants of a maximum of £3,000.  
<http://www.manchesterairport.co.uk/manweb.nsf/Content/CommunityTrustFund>.

## **CONTACTS**

Below are a number of voluntary sector agencies who provide information and support to new groups. Please find them listed below.

**Manchester Community Central** – Manchester Community Central is a project which is managed by Macc. Macc is the voluntary and community sector support organisation for the city of Manchester. Macc aims to improve the health and social welfare of the people of Manchester by working with voluntary and community sector organisations.

<http://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/about-us>

**GreenSpace** - Working towards achieving a network of easily accessible, safe, attractive and welcoming parks, gardens and green spaces which meet the needs of everyone and which contribute to the economic, social and environmental well-being of people and places, now and for future generations. <http://www.green-space.org.uk/>

**Greater Manchester Voluntary Sector Support** - GMVSS is a partnership of local support organisations in Greater Manchester. Individually and collectively they provide support to help the voluntary and community sector. <http://www.gmvss.net/>

## **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.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>AGENDA</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>FRIENDS OF FRIENDLY PLACE PARK MEETING</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>20TH OCTOBER 2013, 6.30PM</b></p> <p>Venue: CROWCROFT PARK BOWLING PAVILION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Welcome, introductions and apologies.</li><li>2. Progress since last meeting</li><li>3. Consultation</li><li>4. Funding applied for</li><li>5. A.O.B. (any other business)</li><li>6. Date and time of next meeting</li><li>7. Close</li></ol>
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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

## SAMPLE MINUTES

### MINUTES OF MEETING

#### FRIENDS OF FRIENDLY PLACE PARK MEETING 20TH OCTOBER 2013, 6.30PM

Venue: CROWCROFT PARK BOWLING PAVILION

#### 1. Welcome, introductions and apologies.

Name	Community member i.e. Friend of Park
Name	Community member i.e. Friend of Park
Name	Community member i.e. Friend of Park
Name	Community member i.e. Friend of Park
Name	Community member i.e. Friend of Park
Name	Manchester City Council
Name	Incident Response

Etc.

Apologies received: Names

#### 2. Progress since last meeting

Charlotte reported that youth workers will now be approaching youths in the area and speaking to them about the "Dream Scheme".

**Action** - Charlotte to give feedback at next two meetings.

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

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

#### 3. Consultation

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

**Action** - Sam to collect names of volunteers for consultation at the forthcoming fun day.

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

**Action** - Charlotte to liaise with youth workers

#### **4. Funding applied for**

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

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

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

**Action** - Cath 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 2013, 6.30pm at Crowcroft Park Bowling Pavilion.

#### **7. Close**

# **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 warden who will be more than happy to help.

## **AIMS**

The Friends of **FRIENDLY PLACE** Park aim to:

1. Create a secure environment in which everyone can enjoy the benefits of the park facilities. This is to be achieved through liaison with the residents, police, council and any other relevant bodies.
2. Enable and encourage informal and formal activities for those of all ages who live and work in the neighbourhood.
3. Work in partnership with Manchester City Council Leisure Department and (whilst recognising that the ultimate responsibility for funding lies with the Council) identifying other funding sources to secure an adequate level of resources to meet local needs; ensure that all developments, activities and uses of the park are carried out in such a way as to encourage and promote environmental sensitivity.
4. Encourage and promote good environmental practice.
5. Establish an acceptable balance between the needs of dog owners and the needs of other park users.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership shall be open to all interested in actively furthering the aims of the Association.

Corporate members shall be such societies, associations; educational institutions or businesses as are interested in actively furthering the needs of the Association. A corporate member shall appoint one representative to vote on it's behalf at all meetings but before such representative exercises his/her right the corporate member shall give written details of the representative to the Secretary.

## **MEETINGS**

The inaugural General Meeting will be held on DATE followed by an Annual General Meeting in or about DATE ONE YEAR ON of subsequent years.

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.

## **OFFICERS**

Nomination for the election of officer shall be made in writing to the Secretary at least 7 days before the Annual General Meeting. To be valid a nomination must be of a member of the Association who is resident of the local neighbourhood, their nomination must be proposed and seconded by other paid up members and the consent of the nominee must be obtained. Nomination forms will be available on request from the Secretary.

If there is no nomination for a particular post received 7 days before the Annual General Meeting nominations shall be accepted from the floor of that meeting.

Nominees for election as officers of Executive Committee members shall declare at the meeting of which their election is to be considered any financial or professional interest known or likely to be of concern to the Association.

The Officers of the Association shall consist of:

**Chair**  
**Vice Chair**  
**Secretary**  
**Assistant Secretary**  
**Treasurer**  
**Assistant Treasurer**

All of who shall relinquish their office every year and shall be eligible for re-election at the Annual General Meeting, but no individual may serve more than 3 consecutive years in one post, unless no other member is eligible or nominated. The Executive Committee shall have the power to fill casual vacancies occurring among the Officers from the membership of the Association.

## **THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The Executive Committee shall be responsible for the management and administration of the Association.

The Executive Committee shall consist of the Officer and not less than 5 and not more than 8 individual members, plus up to 3 corporate members.

The Executive Committee shall have the power to co-opt further members who shall attend in an advisory and no-voting capacity.

In the event of equality in the votes cast at a meeting of the Executive Committee the motion will fall.

Nomination for election to the Executive Committee shall be made in writing to the Secretary at least 7 days before the Annual General Meeting. To be valid nominations must be of fully paid up members who are local residents (with the exception of corporate members), proposed and seconded by two other paid up members and the consent of the nominee must be obtained. Nomination papers will be available from the Secretary on request.

If fewer nominations are received by the deadline than there are vacancies, nominations may be taken from the floor of the meeting up to the number of vacancies available.

Members of the Executive Committee shall be elected annually at the Annual General Meeting of the Association; outgoing members may be re-elected up to a maximum of 6 consecutive years, unless no other member is eligible or nominated.

The Executive Committee shall meet not less than 4 times a year. The Secretary shall give all members not less than 7 days notice of all the meetings.

The quorum shall be 5 Members of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee shall have the power to fill casual vacancies occurring between General Meetings from amongst the paid up members of the Association.

## **ELECTIONS**

If more than one valid nomination for an officer post is received within the time specified, or if the number of valid nominations for members of the Executive Committee received within the specified time exceeds the numbers of places available, election shall be by secret ballot at the Annual General Meeting.

Only those members of the Association present in person at the meeting may vote.

The votes will be counted during the meeting, scrutineers appointed by the meeting and the results announced before the end of the meeting.

## **SUB COMMITTEES**

The Executive Committee may constitute such subcommittees from time to time as shall be considered necessary for such purposes as shall be thought fit in pursuit of the aims of the Association.

The members of each sub-committee shall be appointed by the Executive Committee from amongst the members of the Association. Subcommittees may, with the approval of the Executive Committee, co-opt members who are not members of the Association but they shall advise in an advisory and nonvoting capacity only.



In the event of an equality of votes cast at any meeting of any subcommittee the motion will fall.

Members of the Executive Committee may be members of any subcommittee.

Subcommittees shall be subordinate to and may be regulated or dissolved By the Executive Committee.

## **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

It shall be the duty of every member who is in any way, directly or indirectly, interested financially in any item discussed at any meeting of the Association (including any meeting of any committee or subcommittee) at which s/he is present to declare such interest and s/he shall not discuss such item (except by invitation of the Chair) or vote there on.

## **EXPENSES**

The Executive Committee shall, out of the funds of the Association, pay all proper expenses of administration and management of the Association.

After the payment of the administration and management expenses and the setting aside to reserve of such sums as may be deemed expedient, the remaining funds of the Association shall be applied by the Executive Committee in furtherance of the purposes of the Association.

## **INVESTMENT**

All moneys at any time belonging to the Association and required for immediate application for it's purposes shall be invested by the Executive Committee in or upon such investment, securities or property as it may think fit, subject nevertheless to such authority, approval or consent by the Charity Commissioners as may for the time being be required by law or by the special trusts affecting any property in the hands of the Executive Committee.

## **AMENDMENTS**

This constitution may be amended by a 2/3rds majority of members voting at an Annual General Meeting or Special General Meeting of the Association confirmed by a simple majority of 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.

On dissolution the minutes and other records of the Association shall be deposited with the Local Studies Section of the Central Reference Library.

Adopted by:

Name:

Committee Role:

Signature:

Date:



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