

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 8 NOVEMBER 2011
title: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR FRIENDS GROUPS
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
principal author: CHRIS HUGHES, HEAD OF CULTURAL & LEISURE SERVICES

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To ask members to accept the proposed Memorandum of Understanding for future work with Friends Groups.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
 - Council Ambitions – to protect and enhance the environmental quality of the area.

2 BACKGROUND

At your meeting in July, it was agreed that a common memorandum of understanding (MOU) be developed to establish ground rules for the role of friends groups operating on Council land.

3 CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 The enclosed MOU sets out the respective roles of the Council and friends groups, and identifies how the two parties can work together to enhance the quality of parks and open spaces.
- 3.2 The document attempts to provide a balance between the Council's responsibilities as landowner, and the enthusiasm of friends groups. It aims to provide a framework for safe working practice without stifling other aspirations.
- 3.3 Members should note that the purpose of the report is to agree the basic principles contained within the agreement, and recognise that there may be additions / changes to reflect the Council's legal obligations.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

Approval of this report may have the following implications:

- **Resources** – there are no direct financial issues associated with this report.
- **Technical, Environmental and Legal** – the MOU is intended to provide guidance, rather than become a legally binding contract.
- **Political** – the document sets out the Council's responsibilities, but also demonstrates the added value of volunteers.
- **Reputation** – the report demonstrates that local people can be involved in working to improve their local communities, albeit in a controlled and planned manner.

- 5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE** notes the contents of the report and agrees to adopt the Memorandum of Understanding, subject to any additional legal/statutory requirements.

JOHN C HEAP
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

For further information please ask for Chris Hughes 01200 414479

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR FRIENDS GROUPS

1. INTRODUCTION

It is important that everyone living in the Ribble valley has the opportunity to have access to public open space. The Council is committed to local people who wish to participate in the maintenance of those spaces. As a corporate ambition the Council is working to engage with friends groups to foster a joint sense of custodianship for areas they have both affection and concern for. It is also working to ensure that friends groups are made aware of health and safety issues surrounding the use of volunteers on Council owned land. This will ensure the level of expectations and aspirations are properly managed and realised in a way that does not compromise both the safety of volunteers and other grounds maintenance/biodiversity issues.

It should be recognised that, in signing the memorandum of understanding, Friends Groups are not entering into any form of contractual obligation, merely a statement of commitment to supporting environmental improvements within an agreed area.

2. DEFINING FRIENDS GROUPS

The term 'Friends Group' embraces all forms of volunteering. For the purpose of this document this relates to formal/informal groups who have the desire to support/improve the physical appearance of parks and open space in the ownership of the Council. The Council has the right to determine which groups it will recognise; based on the view of what added value they would bring to a given area.

3. INDIVIDUAL AGREEMENT

Memorandum of Understanding between Ribble Valley Borough Council and the Friends of _____

The purpose of this memorandum of understanding (MOU) is to defined the roles and responsibilities of the Borough Council and Friends Group in respect of the maintenance and improvement of _____

1. The Borough Council

As landowner the Borough Council has ultimate responsibility for all works carried out at _____. This includes routine repair and maintenance of all areas, based on planned programmes, subject to change, depending on the availability of resources. The Council is also responsible for carrying any works that arise as a result of health and safety concerns. The Council shall also, from time to time, carry out more intensive works, aimed at improving the location. Where possible, the Council shall give notice to the friends of any such works.

2. The Friends Group

The friends have the option to deliver functions such as, bulb planting, bedding out, weeding, litter picking and painting, subject to the prior approval of the Borough Council. As volunteers working on Council land individuals shall be afforded the same insurance cover of paid employees, subject to prior approval of the work carried out and adherence to any risk assessments/safe working practices issued by the Council.

3. Joint Working

An annual work programme shall be jointly agreed between the Council and Friends at the start of each year. This will detail work to be carried out by the Friends and any tasks, over and above routine repair and maintenance, carried out by the Council. It will also identify, as appropriate, any projects that may be jointly delivered. In these cases it will be up to the Council to determine the scope of works volunteers will be allowed to carry out.

4. Special Projects

These are projects where the scope of works requires more than existing resources can support. Examples of such work may include providing/enhancing children's play areas, installation of new structures or the construction of new footpaths. If the Friends are generating such projects then they must get prior approval from the Council to ensure that –

- a. they are appropriate to the setting
- b. that there is sufficient external funding to cover the cost
- c. that any ongoing maintenance costs can be contained within existing budgets.

4. Declaration

The Friends of _____ accept the principles contained within this memorandum of understanding and, more specifically, will only carry out works at _____ with the prior approval of the Council.

Signed	
Position	

ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME TEMPLATE

1. Details of any work to be carried out by the Council, over and above routine repair and maintenance
2. Details of work to be carried out by the Friends
3. Details of Joint Working
4. Details of any health and Safety Requirements – risk assessments, guidance notes, training needs (all documents must be attached)
5. Review Meeting Dates (quarterly)
6. Any Other Issues