

Environmental Management Division

Parks Development

**Friends Information Pack
& Guide**

Introduction

This is an information pack for those intending to set up a 'Friends of the Park' group, as well as for existing groups and council employees. The need for such a pack was identified by the Friends Network and existing friends groups.

It has been put together with the help of the members of the Parks Development Team and most importantly other friends groups.

Setting up a Friends Group

What is a Friends Group?

A friends group is a number of interested local people coming together with the aim of improving the appearance, facilities, conservation value and safety of their local Park or Open space. People involved at the start will already care about this, but you will inevitably attract new members as you go and start to achieve things.

Why form a group?

This can be for any number of reasons; the main one is usually wishing to do something positive about your park/open space. A friends group can be an effective and recognised method of achieving this.

How to use this pack

This pack is designed as a quick, easy reference guide on the successful running of a group. It will hopefully answer a number of questions you may have, whether you are a member of an existing friends group or someone thinking about setting one up. It is split up into a number of sections covering often asked questions such as "Do we need to have a constitution?" and "Where can we get some money from?"

FRIENDS... We all need them!

One of the Parks Development's main aims is to support the establishment of a self sustaining network of community groups working in partnership with the Council towards the regeneration of parks and open spaces.

The establishment of 'friends' or 'action' groups are a relatively new development within the Borough and is rapidly gaining momentum within the community. Such groups work in partnership with the Council and parks service staff in not only addressing current issues, but also in looking to the long term regeneration and development of their park.

Part of our philosophy is to encourage communities to have a sense for governorship of their parks and open spaces. It is essential that we look to develop self sustaining groups. A sustainable friends group means the individuals involved in that group have the confidence and skills to be self maintaining. In the early stages to development / establishment support mechanisms are available. The hope being that, in time the friends groups will be able to continue with reduced support enabling staff to aid development in new areas of the borough.

The existing Friends Groups have established an online presence on Dudley Open Spaces Forum on Facebook, with hopes to develop it further in the future.

Dudley Open Spaces Forum links groups together, enables local people to share experiences, discuss common issues and exchange ideas about projects, events etc. Such links help to establish a further support network at a grass roots level, again enabling limited resources to be maximised.

Getting members and keeping them

As a friends group you will never get the whole of the community turning up to your event, let alone your meetings. So, you must value and treasure the ones that do. Here are some ideas on how to achieve this:

- Arrange for each member to invite a friend or neighbour to a meeting;
- Ensure that the atmosphere is friendly and that new members are warmly welcomed
- Give praise and thanks where due and plan activities that encourage wide involvement such as fun/family days.

People will come forward if they feel they have something to offer, such as contacts and information, social skills such as resolving conflicts and knowledge of different cultures, practical skills such as producing leaflets and taking minutes, organisational skills such as planning and running meetings, new ideas and a sense of humour for new prospective and having fun!

Reviewing progress

Many groups achieve an enormous amount without anyone else realising it. This should be celebrated and one way to do this is to have an annual review, which could be compiled with the help of the Parks Development team and distributed around your local area, letting the local population know what you have done and hopefully winning their appreciation and possibly some new members.

Getting out of a slump

Sometimes things will go wrong, key members will leave for a variety of reasons and you may lose your initial enthusiasm. The first thing to do is to recognise this fact and that these problems will not solve themselves. You need to raise this with other members of the group and try to find out why people have left, as well as whether the existing members are happy with how the group is being run (people can often stay on out of a sense of duty).

How the Parks Development Team can help

It is the role of the staff in the Parks Development Team to provide parks and public open spaces suitable for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Their aim is to ensure that the Borough's parks and green spaces are safe local environments in which people can play, learn and socialise or just escape from the pressure of everyday life.

There is a list of Useful Council Contacts at the end of the pack.

The Bare Necessities

The beginning

An initial meeting is usually called after some form of public consultation, which will have established what the local issues are and if there is a need or demand for setting up a friends group.

Getting started, your first meeting

It is a good idea to have a public launch in order to attract as many potential friends as possible. Support will be provided by the Parks Development Team in establishing your group. They can provide details of other friends groups in the borough. You will then need to decide on 'who does what' and 'what you want to achieve'. It is often a good idea to invite the chair from an existing group to attend your initial meeting. They have been through this stage already and will be happy to share experiences and give you advice.

Setting your aims

By now you may be aware of the issues in your area and you need to decide what your initial priorities will be: Do you want to improve the play area or solve the dog mess problem? Do you want to run an event or organise a litter blitz?

Once this is agreed you will need to think about how you are going to do it, how much it will cost, where the money is going to come from and who you can get to help. It is also a good idea to decide what you would like to achieve in the first year and set a timetable. It is also important to be realistic. Having established the group, running an event and starting a petition to make improvements would be a perfectly satisfactory outcome for the first year.

If you are not sure what your members and the other park users want to happen in your park -you need to find out.

There are a number of ways of doing this: you could distribute a questionnaire, create an online survey or you could organise a consultation event. The Parks Development Team has experience in this area and can provide advice and suggestions. They may already have some information based upon previous surveys.

Meetings

After the initial meeting you will need to decide on further meetings, how often, what time and where to have them and most importantly what to talk about.

The venue

Is it comfortable, accessible, warm in winter and quiet? Can people get to the meetings easily and do they feel they can get home safely afterwards?

Letting people know

If they don't know it's happening they won't come. Publicise the dates well in advance, produce a list of dates, put flyers and posters up locally, advertise online, send new members a map and put a poster at the venue to indicate where the meeting is.

Timing

Consult all of your members as to the best time for meetings and vary times if necessary. Inform people of start times. It is the Chair's responsibility to ensure the meeting keeps to time, and that everyone present is involved and that people keep to the point.

People

One of the biggest obstacles can be people's different perceptions of meetings. Few people ever think they speak too long or are boring others or that the way they run a meeting is poor. Others may see things differently however. Your members will be coming to the meeting to learn what is going on and to contribute to decision making, it is important that they feel valued. It is sometimes a good idea to rotate the chairing of meetings.

Agenda

It is important to have a written agenda for your meetings, as this keeps people to the point, they know what you will be talking about and can suggest topics to be discussed. A suggested format for meetings is as follows:

Agenda for meeting at (date, start and finish time and place of meeting).

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the last meeting – are they accurate?
4. Matters arising from last meeting
5. Reports on the decisions about group activities - list them, so people know specifically what activities you are referring to.
6. Treasurer's report
7. Any other business
8. Date and time of next meeting

Minutes

Make sure that you write down all decisions and action points, agree and record who is going to carry them out, and send copies to all relevant people.

Equal opportunities

The Council has a policy on this subject, which you should adopt and follow. You can get a copy by contacting the Parks Development Team.

Working with the community

When planning and carrying out any activity advertise the fact as widely as possible, there may be people, who do not wish to get involved with the group on a full time basis but would be willing to help out on a particular project or issue.

Planning projects/work

If something is not planned, it may go wrong or probably not even get off the ground. It is essential to plan things thoroughly in advance. Try to think of all the problems that may occur and find ways to get round these if they happen. You can never be too thorough. A well planned and well run event can be great fun and very satisfying. The Events Team, based at Himley Hall, organise and run all the Council's events and if you are proposing to hold an event on your park you should contact them for help and advice.

All events must be registered with the Events Team; this is to avoid double bookings!

Putting Your Group on a More Formal Footing

In some cases the first thing a group does is to set up a committee, and in others it is something they get round to eventually. Neither of these approaches is right or wrong, but as soon as the group starts to make applications for money and needs to open a bank account, it will have to form a committee.

Setting up a committee

It is important that the right people are elected to the following roles:-

Chairperson

The Chair's role first and foremost is responsibility for the group. They need to know what is going on and to plan ahead. A key role is leadership, setting a positive example, being the person who turns up on a cold wet evening. The most important role, however, is coordination. This means encouraging others who have taken on responsibilities within the group to carry them out. Also insuring that committee meetings run smoothly and to order and that everyone gets a say and that they are listened to. The Chair should also be the main link with the Council.

Vice chairperson

Has the role of deputising and chairing meetings in the absence of the Chair, they can also share some of the responsibilities with the Chair.

Secretary

This is a vital role; you need someone who is organised, good at taking minutes or action points of meetings and accurately producing them on time for the next meeting. Preferably, someone who has access to a personal computer, printer and email. They will also be responsible for any correspondence that the group has.

Treasurer

This is also a vital role, all friends groups need to keep accounts which are annually audited and made available to members at the Annual General Meeting.

Information/publicity officer

This is a vital role, you need someone who is organised and preferably with access to internet, email and a computer. They will need skills in using social media too. This role is vital for communication online, which is now the most popular way to promote and connect with others.

Other committee members

There are a number of other positions that a group can establish such as fundraiser and social secretary. Although these are not strictly necessary, other friends groups have found them useful and if you have a number of keen members, it is always a good idea to get them involved in the running of the group.

Constitution

The next thing to do is to adopt a constitution. The reason for doing this is to ensure the groups aims are clear to all members, to provide a means for making decisions and resolving disputes, to gain credibility with bank managers and grant providers, to clarify liability and lines of responsibility, to ensure accountability and to enable the group to affiliate to other similar bodies such as the Friends Network. The easiest way to do this is to adopt one similar to that being used by existing friends groups; the Parks Development Team can provide sample constitutions.

You need to have an Annual General Meeting once a year in order to elect or re-elect committee members and present an annual report and accounts to the rest of the group's members. It is a good idea to combine this with a talk or social event.

Groups should also set out their aims and objectives so that everyone can understand what they are joining.

Charitable status

Although as a friends group you do not have to become a registered charity, it could be helpful in marketing and fundraising. Also the public are immediately reassured if you are a registered charity - in other words you are official. The word charity still evokes a positive response. To be able to write to potential grant providers as a registered charity puts you to cut above the rest, some grant providers especially charitable trusts, prefer to give their money to registered charities and you may put your group at a disadvantage by not being registered.

Business plan

If you want to be really professional, you could draw up a business plan for the group. This will impress potential grant providers no end. If you do, it should be used in planning your fundraising and accounting procedures.

Insurance

It is vitally important that whatever your group decides to do, you are covered by some form of insurance, normally public liability. If your activity is being run by a member of Parks Development Team, you will be covered by the council's insurance. If you plan to run your own separate event, consult an insurance broker or Adrian Butcher, the Council's Senior Events Officer on 01384 817834, for further information.

Example Constitution

Constitution

Adopted on the.....day of20

A. Name

The name of the Association is

.....

(Hence referred to as The Friends).

B. Administration,

Subject to the matters set out below the Charity and its property shall be administered and managed in accordance with this constitution by the members of the Executive Committee, constituted by clause G of this constitution (“the Executive Committee”)

C. Objects

The Friends’ objects (“the objects”) are

- (1) Improve facilities in the park for all, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, politics or religion and to promote wider use of the park in general, for the benefit of the local community.
- (2) Promote safety in the park for all concerned.
- (3) Promote such other charitable purposes as may from time to time be determined.
- (4) Promote activity for young people and children on the park.
- (5) To promote and develop liaison between the group and the local community and other organisations.
- (6) To promote education and provide facilities in the interest of social welfare with the object of improving the conditions of life in the local community.

D. Powers

In furtherance of the objects but not otherwise the Executive Committee may exercise the following powers:

- (i) Power to raise funds and to invite and receive contributions provided that in raising funds the Executive Committee shall not undertake any substantial permanent trading activities and shall conform to any relevant requirements of the law;
- (ii) Power to co-operate with other charities, voluntary bodies and statutory authorities operating in furtherance of the objects or of similar charitable purposes and to exchange information and advice with them;
- (iii) Power to establish or support any charitable trusts, associations or institutions formed for all or any of the objects;
- (iv) Power to appoint and constitute such advisory committees as the Executive Committee may think fit;
- (v) Powers to do all such other lawful things as are necessary for the achievement of the objects.
- (vi) Power to hold public meetings, exhibitions or lectures etc.

E. Membership

- (1) Membership of the Friends shall be open to any person over the age of 16years interested in furthering the objects.

- (2) Members can only vote if they are over the age of 18 years.
- (3) Every member shall have one vote.
- (4) Annual re-election of all executive members.
- (5) The Executive Committee may by a two-thirds majority vote and for good reason terminate the membership of any individual; provided that the individual concerned shall have the right to be heard by the Executive Committee, accompanied by a friend, before a final decision is made.
- (6) The Friends reserve the right to set a membership fee if deemed necessary in the future.

F. Honorary Officers

At the annual general meeting of the Friends the members shall elect from amongst themselves a chair person, a secretary and a treasurer, who shall hold office from the conclusion of that meeting.

G. Executive Committee

- (1) The Executive Committee shall consist of not less than 3 members no more than 10 members being:
 - (a) The honorary officers specified in the preceding clause
 - (b) Not more than 7 members elected at the annual general meeting who shall hold office from the conclusion of the meeting
- (2) The Executive Committee may in addition appoint not more than 4 co-opted members but so that no-one may be appointed as a co-opted member if, as a result more than one third of the members of the Executive Committee would be co-opted members. Each appointment of a co-opted member shall be made at a special meeting of the Executive Committee called under clause J and shall take effect from the end of that meeting unless the appointment is to fill a place which has not then been vacated in which case the appointment shall run from the date when the post becomes vacant
- (3) All members of the Executive Committee shall retire from office together at the end of the annual general meeting next after the date on which they came into office but they may be re-elected or re-appointed.
- (4) The proceedings of the Executive Committee shall not be invalidated by any vacancy among their number nor by any failure to appoint or any defect in the appointment or qualification of a member so long as there is a quorum present.
- (5) Nobody shall be appointed as a member of the Executive Committee who is aged under 18 or who would if appointed be disqualified under the provisions of the following clause.
- (6) No person shall be entitled to act as a member of the Executive Committee whether on a first or on any subsequent entry into office until after signing in the minute book of the Executive Committee a declaration of acceptance and of willingness to act in the trusts of the Charity.

H. Determination of Membership of the Executive Committee

A member of the Executive Committee shall cease to hold office if he or she:

- (1) is disqualified from acting as a member of the Executive Committee by virtue of section 72 of the Charities Act 1993 (or any statutory re-enactment or modification of that provision);
- (2) becomes incapable by reason of mental disorder, illness or injury of managing and administering his or her own affairs;

(3) is absent without the permission of the Executive Committee from all their meetings held within a period of six months and the Executive Committee that his or her office be vacated.

I. Executive Committee Members not to be personally interested.

No member of the Executive Committee shall acquire any interest in property belonging to the Charity (otherwise than as a trustee for the Charity) or receive remuneration or be interested (otherwise than as a member of the Executive Committee) in any contract entered into by the Executive Committee.

J. Meetings and proceedings of the Executive Committee

(1) The Executive Committee shall hold at least two general meetings each year. A special meeting may be called at any time by the chairperson or by any two members of the Executive Committee upon not less than 4 days notice being given to the other members of the Executive Committee of the matters to be discussed but if the matters include an appointment of a co-opted member then not less than 21 days' notice must be given.

(2) The chairman shall act as chairman at meetings of the Executive Committee. If the chairman is absent from any meeting, the members of the Executive Committee present shall choose one of their number to be chairman of the meeting before any other business is transacted.

(3) There shall be a quorum when at least one half of the number of members of the Executive Committee for the time being or three members of the Executive Committee, whichever is the greater is present at a meeting.

(4) Every matter shall be determined by a majority of votes of the members of the Executive Committee present and voting on the question but in the case of equality of votes the chairperson of the meeting shall have a second or casting vote.

(5) The Executive Committee shall keep minutes, in books kept for the purpose, of the proceedings at meetings of the Executive Committee and any subcommittee.

(6) The Executive Committee may from time to time make and alter rules for the conduct of their business, the summoning and conduct of their meetings and the custody of documents. No rule may be made which is inconsistent with this constitution.

(7) The Executive Committee may appoint one or more sub-committees consisting of three or more members of the Executive Committee for the purpose of making any enquiry or supervising or performing any function or duty which in the opinion of the Executive Committee would be more conveniently undertaken or carried out by a sub-committee: provided that all acts and proceedings of any such sub-committees shall be fully and promptly reported to the Executive Committee.

K. Receipts and Expenditure

(1) The funds of the Charity, including all donations and contributions and bequests, shall be paid into an account operated by the Executive Committee in the name of the Charity at such bank as the Executive 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.

(2) The funds belonging to the Charity shall be applied only in furthering the objects.

L. Accounts

The Executive Committee shall comply with their obligations under the Charities Act 1993 (or any statutory re-enactment or modification of that Act) with regard to:

- (1) The keeping of accounting records for the Charity;
- (2) The preparation of annual statements of account for the Charity;
- (3) The auditing or independent examination of the statements of account of the Charity; and
- (4) The transmission of the statements of account of the Charity to the Commission.

M. Annual Report

The Executive Committee shall comply with their obligations under the Charities Act 1993 (or any statutory re-enactment or modification of the Act) with regard to the preparation of an annual report and its transmission to the Charity Commission.

N. Annual Return

The Executive Committee shall comply with their obligations under the Charities Act 1993 (or any statutory re-enactment or modification of that Act) with regard to the preparation of an annual return and its transmission to the Charity Commission.

O. Annual General Meeting

- (1) There shall be an annual general meeting of the Friends which shall be held in the month of in each year or as soon as practical thereafter.
- (2) Every annual general meeting shall be called by the Executive Committee. The secretary shall give at least 21 days' notice of the annual general meeting to all the members of the Charity. All the members of the Charity shall be entitled to attend and vote at the meeting.
- (3) Before any other business is transacted at the first annual general meeting the persons present shall appoint a chairperson of the meeting. The chairperson shall be the chairperson of subsequent annual general meetings, but if he or she is not present, before any other business is transacted, the persons present shall appoint a chairperson of the meeting.
- (4) The Executive Committee shall present to each annual general meeting the report and accounts of the Charity for the previous year.
- (5) Nominations for election to the Executive Committee must be made by members of the Charity in writing and must be in the hands of the secretary of the Executive Committee at least 14 days before the annual general meeting. Should nominations exceed vacancies, election shall be by ballot. In the event that insufficient nominations are received by the secretary nominations for the vacancies may be received and appointments approved at the annual general meeting.
- (6) Minutes of the annual general meeting to be copied and forwarded to Dudley MBC.

P. Special General Meetings

The Executive Committee may call a special general meeting of the Charity at any time. If at least ten members request such a meeting in writing stating the business to be considered the secretary shall call such a meeting. At least 21 days' notice must be given. The notice must state the business to be discussed.

Q. Procedure at General Meetings

- (1) The secretary or other person specially appointed by the Executive Committee shall keep a full record of the proceedings at every general meeting of the Charity.
- (2) There shall be a quorum when at least one tenth of the number of members of the Charity for the time being or ten members of the charity, whichever is the greater, are at present at any general meeting.

R Notices

Any notice required to be served on any member of the Charity shall be in writing and shall be served by the secretary or the Executive Committee on any member either personally or by sending it through the post in a prepaid letter addressed to such member at his or her last known address in the United Kingdom, and any letter so sent shall be deemed to have been received within 5 days of posting.

S. Alterations to Constitution

- (1) Subject to the following provisions of this clause the Constitution may be altered by a resolution passed by not less than two thirds of the members present and voting at a general meeting. The notice of the general meeting must include notice of the resolution, setting out the terms of the alteration proposed.
- (2) No amendment may be made to clause A (the name of the Charity clause), clause C (the objects clause), clause I (Executive Committee members not to be personally interested clause), clause T (the dissolution clause) or this clause without the prior consent in writing of the Charity Commission.
- (3) No amendment may be made which would have the effect of making the Charity cease to be a charity at law.

T. Dissolution

If the Executive Committee decides that it is necessary or advisable to dissolve the Charity it shall call a meeting of all members of the Charity, of which not less than 21 days' notice (stating the terms of the resolution to be proposed) shall be given. If the proposal is confirmed by a two thirds majority of those present and voting the Executive Committee shall have power to realise any assets held by or on behalf of the Charity. Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities shall be given or transferred to such other charitable institution or institutions having objects similar to the objects of the Charity as the members of the Charity may determine or failing that shall be applied for some other charitable purpose. A copy of the statement of accounts, or account and statement, for the final accounting period of the Charity must be sent to the Commission.

U. Arrangements until First Annual General Meeting

Until the first annual general meeting takes place this constitution shall take effect as if references in it to the Executive Committee were references to the persons whose signatures appear at the bottom of this document.

V. Alterations to the Constitution

This Constitution may be amended only at an Annual General Meeting or an Extraordinary General Meeting of The Friends duly convened and held. Notice of the meeting shall specify the alterations to be proposed. The assent of not less than seventy five percent of the members present and voting shall be required to give effect to any alteration.

W. Indemnity

Every member of the Committee shall be entitled to be indemnified out of the assets of The Friends against all losses and liabilities incurred by him or in relation to the execution of his office provided that nothing in this clause shall entitle him to any indemnity against liability arising through negligence or fraud or similar actions on his part.

This constitution was adopted on the date mentioned above by the persons whose signatures appear at the bottom of this document.

Signed.....

Getting Your Message Across

All groups need publicity and it needs to be positive. Good publicity can benefit your group by raising awareness of your existence, getting your message across and gaining new members. You need to have a clear and understandable message.

The main aims of publicity are to attract new members and money. Therefore it is worth spending time and money on making sure it is effective. There are a number of ways of publicising your group and you may find some of the following useful.

Newsletters

These are a good idea for keeping your members and the rest of the public informed of what you are doing they are also a great way to attract new members. They should ideally contain short informative articles, forthcoming events and a way for the readers to comment on issues. It is also useful to keep a record of who it goes to. Many of the existing friends groups produce newsletters either creating them on their own or with help from the Parks Development Team.

Website /Social Media

Online presence is the strongest form of advertising/promotion at this present time. Setting up a Facebook page, Twitter account or even an Instagram account can attract attention of local residents and park users. The Parks Development Team is happy to assist in setting up these accounts and will show you how to use them.

In addition, creating a promotional website dedicated to the park/open space and the friends group will really give the group that professional look and help to promote the groups aims and objectives. Again, if help is needed Parks Development is at hand.

Please bear in mind that once set up, the website and social media account need to be managed and updated on a regular basis. It may be useful to have a select person of the group in charge of this.

Posters/leaflets

People cannot come to events/meetings if they don't know they exist. A simple A5 and A4 poster can be very effective. They can be displayed in your local library, schools, local shops, sports centres, pubs, community centres, clinics, places of worship, neighbourhood offices and distributed to houses.

Important things to remember with posters and leaflets are - make them colourful, include where, when, who and a contact as well as any sponsors you may have for the activity.

Local Newspapers

The press can normally be relied upon to come out to an event if you make it interesting enough.

Hints of writing a successful press release:

- Get it typed (double spaced if possible)
- Keep it short and to the point, no more than one side.
- The first sentence should include who, what, where, when and why.
- Summarise your main points in your first paragraph.
- Use your following paragraphs to expand on the main points.
- Give a daytime contact number and make sure they are available.
- Suggest a photo opportunity.
- Try to get to know local journalists.

Effective partnerships and networking

As the old saying goes 'a problem shared is a problem halved'. There are obvious advantages in groups sharing information, advice, skills and expertise to allow your activities to be effective, efficient, economical and sustainable. If you as a friends group have a success or a failure with an event, it is useful to share this experience with the other friends groups. This may be expressed through the Dudley Open Spaces Forum.

Useful council contacts

The Parks Development Team

Liz Stuffins: Green Spaces Team Leader

Tel: 01384 816991

Email: liz.stuffins@dudley.gov.uk

Daniel Fildes: Parks Development Manager

Tel: 01384 815589

Email: daniel.fildes@dudley.gov.uk

Emily Jeavons: Parks Development Officer

Tel: 01384 816994

Email: emily.jeavons@dudley.gov.uk

Countryside & Nature Reserves

David Keeley: Countryside Manager

Tel: 01384 814189

Email: david.keeley@dudley.gov.uk

Alan Preece: Senior Warden Saltwells Nature Reserve

Tel: 01384 812795

alan.preece@dudley.gov.uk

Anthony Ravenscroft: Senior Warden Leasowes Nature Reserve

Tel: 01384 814642

Anthony.ravenscroft@dudley.gov.uk

Mark Williams: Senior Warden Fens Pool Nature Reserve

Tel: 01384 812780

Mark.williams@dudley.gov.uk

Ian Beech: Senior Warden Wrens Nest Nature Reserve

Tel: 01384 812785

ian.beech@dudley.gov.uk

Events

Adrian Butcher: Senior Events Officer

Tel: 01384 817835

Adrian.butcher@dudley.gov.uk

Emergency Contacts

West Midlands Police

Tel: 101 (Non-Emergency)
contactus@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk

Dudley Council Plus

Tel: 0300 555 2345
dudleycouncilplus@dudley.gov.uk

Dudley Council Emergency Maintenance (& out of hours)

Tel: 01384 812345

Postal Enquiries

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Council House,
Priory Road,
Dudley,
DY1 1HF.

Frequently asked Questions

Who can help resolve your enquiry?

Grounds Maintenance

Who is responsible for the day to day grounds maintenance - grass cutting, shrub pruning, and tree works? All day to day grounds maintenance is carried out by the council's own team who are called Green care. If you are unhappy with the standard of maintenance, or have a query about what maintenance should be carried out in your area you should direct your enquiries to:

Dudley Council Plus. Tel: 0300 555 2345

Ball games

Can you put up a sign to stop children playing ball games on an open space? It is not the policy of the Directorate of the Urban Environment to erect new, or replace old 'No Ball Games' signs on open space land. The council does not have any legal powers to enforce such signs. In most cases open space land was acquired specifically for the purposes of recreation and the playing of ball games is considered to be a recreational activity.

Where such activities result in trespass or damage to property this is a criminal offence and should be reported to the police.

Litter/Fly Tipping/Graffiti

Rubbish on Parks/Public Open Space, how do I get it removed? Someone has tipped rubbish on other council land, how do I get it removed? A Green care contractor or waste enforcement officer will look through the waste to see if they can find any identification, they will contact and challenge if possible.

Contact: Dudley Council Plus. Tel: 0300 555 2345

Dog Fouling

I know someone who is allowing their dog to persistently foul public land. Can the council do about it? It is an offence under the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996, not to remove dog faeces from public open land and contravention of this carries a maximum fine, on conviction, of £1000 or a fixed penalty of £25.

You should direct your enquiries to:

Dudley Council Plus. Tel: 0300 555 2345

What can the Council do about stray horses on public open space?

The council does not have a horse catching team and cannot impound horses which are allowed to wander across public land. In most cases the horses are recovered by their owners within a matter of hours. However the Council does retain a bailiff who where necessary carries out planned and targeted action. We do provide the bailiff with regular information about the number and location of stray horses, so you should report all information to:

Parks Development Team: 01384 815589

Legal Grazing

Can I rent some land to graze my horse?

The council has 49 grazing sites which are leased to horse owners. There is a waiting list for grazing land but if you wish to register you should contact:

Parks Development Team: 01384 815589

Allotments

I would like to have an allotment can you help?

The majority of allotment sites in the Borough are managed by allotment associations, for contact details of allotment secretary's telephone:

Parks Development Team: 01384 815589

Football, cricket and bowls pitches

My team would like to book a pitch who do I ask? The majority of our pitches are leased on a seasonal basis, however a small number of pitches are available for a casual booking please contact: **Parks Development Team: 01384 815589**

The Changing rooms at . . . football pitch are not clean, have been vandalised, etc.

Problems with regard to cleaning of changing rooms please contact:

Daniel Fildes 01384 815589

Who is the contact for the Football Forum?

4 times a year the council meets with all the major amateur leagues playing on its pitches. You should contact: **Parks Development Team Tel No: 01384 815589**

Friends of Parks

I would like to join my local Friends Group who do I contact? I would like to set up a friends Group can you help? There are currently about 23 Friends groups in the borough which are run by local people who care about their park. We can give you the contact details for your local group. We can also provide advice and support to people who wish to set up new group. For further information please contact:

Emily Jeavons 01384 816994 emily.jeavons@dudley.gov.uk

Can I use my Local Park/ green space to hold a fete or community event?

We encourage the public to use their local park or green space for community events. However it is essential that we know when and where the event is being held and that all necessary steps are being taken to ensure public health and safety. Therefore you **MUST** register your activity at least 3 months in advance with the council's Events Team, based at Himley Hall, who will provide information and advice about organising your event.

Adrian Butcher 01384 817835 adrian.butcher@dudley.gov.uk

Can I take my wedding photos in the park?

We are happy to accommodate such requests but it is important that the Park Keeper Service knows about them. You should formally request permission by contacting **Parks Development on 01384 816991**

Someone has abandoned a car on council land who can deal with it?

Dudley Council Plus 0300 555 2345

People are riding motorbikes and quad bikes on Public Open Spaces.

You should report the incident to the police with as much detail as possible. The council does not allow the use of motorbikes on any of its parks and open spaces.

I wanted to use the park but it was locked.

We secure King George V, Wordsley; Stevens Park, Quarry Bank and Silver Jubilee Park, Coseley. Mary Stevens Park Times are displayed on the notice board at the entrance to the park.

The toilets were locked

Sometimes toilets are closed through vandalism or in the interests of public safety. There are no set open/closing times.

Injured wildlife on parks

Public should inform contact RSPCA helpline.

Complaints regarding flower beds/planting/shrubs/trees

Green care maintain these contact **Dudley Council Plus. Tel: 0300 555 2345**

Our Friends group wish to raise funds to develop our local park or hold an event. Who do I contact?

There are many avenues a friends group can go down to apply for funding, depending on what your project involves. Contact Emily Jeavons,

Parks Development Officer to discuss further. **01384 816994**
emily.jeavons@dudley.gov.uk