

Chair's Report AGM – 23rd November 2009

1. This Annual General Meeting is also a celebration of FARRG's eighth birthday and, for most of us, marks eight continuous years of voluntary service on the Group's Committee. We should all be proud of what we have achieved together during this period. Not only has the Albert Road Recreation Ground been physically transformed over the last eight years, the park and its radically improved recreational and other facilities have also become an integral part of the life of the local community. The vibrant presence of local people, in particular families and children, in this recreation ground is undoubtedly the best measure of our success to-date.
2. The last twelve months have been characterised by further positive developments and improvements. Highlights worth mentioning here include:
 - Haringey Council's planning permission for the complete renovation of the tennis and basket ball courts which has opened the way for the upgrading of the park's core sporting facilities
 - The award of a Green Flag for the fourth successive year
 - The addition of new play equipment and a trim trail for the benefit of older children following the award of around £15,000 by Haringey Council
 - The widening and resurfacing of the footpaths from the Pavilion to the entrance to Alexandra Park School
3. FARRG's partnership with Cancer Research UK which required a major organisational and marketing effort throughout the year led to the first ever 24 hour "Relay for Life" event held in Haringey in July 2009, with the involvement of 10 local teams which included a team assembled by FARRG. We succeeded in attracting circa £4,000 for the cause and FARRG was declared the team award winner of "Most Money Raised" in the event. Overall, more than £20,000 was raised for this worthwhile cause and the actual relay, complete with overnight camping tents, became a remarkable story of community involvement in the park. Our spirits held up despite the torrential rain which lasted throughout the night! This event would not have been possible without the active co-operation of FARRG, Robby and the Pavilion, "Haringey Relay for Life" Committee and, in particular its chair, Jill Gordon, Cancer Research UK and Haringey Council. Its success, however, was mainly down to the way in which the event was embraced by the local community because of the work done by a number of unsung local heroes and heroines who drummed up support for the Relay in the months before it happened.
4. Our successes during the year were crowned with national sports development awards conferred upon Robby Sukhdeo earlier this month by the Institute for Sports, Parks and Leisure. These awards are a fitting recognition for Robby's passion for tennis and sports development generally in our recreation ground and beyond, as well as a reflection of his drive, single-minded determination and entrepreneurial spirit which have served him and the local community well over the last eight years of hard work. This, of course, is only one of the ingredients of the formula which has led to this success story. The support which Robby has enjoyed from the group of dedicated volunteers which makes up FARRG, both on and off the committee, is the other vital ingredient without which we would not be where we are today. This partnership has enabled us to work effectively with Haringey Council and local schools as well as the police and parks constabulary in order to deliver steady improvements since FARRG's formation and the arrival of Pavilion Tennis and Cafe in the park.

Friends of Albert Road Recreational Ground & Play Area

5. As with previous years, FARRG has been instrumental in organising a series of events in the park including our annual Jazz Fest, several quiz nights, a family sports day, bulb planting, an “Easter Egg” hunt and a Christmas Party. The Recreation Ground remains a popular venue for cricket, football and Aussie Rules while local schools often use the pitches for sporting activities including annual sports day events.
6. It is also worth mentioning here: a) that your Chair and Robby have been actively involved in discussions, over recent months, with all relevant parties regarding proposed Phase II of the Oliver Tambo Memorial which, if implemented, will deliver potentially transformational funding to the Albert Rec; b) that work has commenced in relation to the Haringey/South Africa World Cup initiative. Robby’s brainchild, this is intended to celebrate football in Haringey by involving the borough’s football teams in a competitive tournament during next year’s World Cup in South Africa, culminating in a final to be held at the Albert Rec on the day of the World Cup final. Apart from the obvious sporting benefits, this exciting proposal also provides the opportunity to highlight and celebrate the connection between the Albert Rec and the local schools of Alexandra Park and Rhodes Avenue with South Africa. The proposed tournament will also be a fitting tribute to our good friend and Committee member Mike Terry who passed away suddenly during the year and whose contribution and counsel have been sorely missed by all of us ever since his untimely departure. Mike’s sudden death was a big loss for so many people and a major setback for our Group of which Mike was such an inspiring member. He was truly irreplaceable and will always be fondly remembered by all of us.
7. It is important to note in the context of this report that the funds (around £300,000) pledged by the Tennis Foundation for the renovation of the tennis and basket ball courts are on stream and available for investment. Subject to formal legal, administrative and compliance requirements being met, we anticipate that works will commence early in the New Year with a view to the renewed courts being ready for use by the summer of next year. Fingers crossed!
8. As Chair, I have made a point of maintaining a regular dialogue with the political leadership of Haringey Council in relation to key matters affecting our park. Robby and I are due to meet with Cllr Claire Kober, the current leader, and Cllr George Meehan, the former leader of the Council on 27th November 2009.
9. I want to end this report with my traditional tributes to all of the people who have helped make a difference to our park in the last twelve months. First, all of the voluntary members of our committee who have contributed to our work in their different ways, in particular Joanna Christophides for her minute taking and Gianluca Lo Iacono for his maintenance of our website and his treasury duties; second, Haringey Council’s staff, in particular, Tony Healey and Neil Armstrong; third, all of the Pavilion staff whether in the Cafe or on the courts; fourth, our partners Alexandra Park School and Rhodes Avenue for their co-operation and interest; and last but by no means least, Robby, for his and the Pavilion’s support and hospitality. We must all pay tribute to the many unsung community heroes and heroines who drum up support for our and the Pavilion’s many events and functions throughout the year. This is a success story thanks to a combination of entrepreneurial spirit, voluntary community service and local people coming together in support of their local environment. Long may it continue!

Peter Droussiotis – 23rd November 2009