



FRIENDS of MEADS  
PARKS and GARDENS

## Winter Newsletter – December 2024

### Review of 2024

There is no doubt that this year has seen a seismic shift in the way that the town's parks and gardens are to be managed in the time remaining until the expiry of the contract with the main contractor IdVerde in March 2026.

Back in June, prompted by dissatisfaction with IdVerde's maintenance of a number of seafront flower beds, the Friends of Eastbourne Seafront called a meeting of all Friends of parks and gardens groups, to share experiences and agree a joint strategy to deal with the situation. This led to the formation of a new group: Friends Together with virtually all Friends groups, including Ocklynge Cemetery, being represented.

Friends Together agreed that it was important for the council to be aware of what we were doing, which resulted in several councillors and one senior council officer attending the second meeting of the group, which took place on 22 July. The major outcome of this meeting was the agreement that each Friends group should draw up a list of priorities for their respective spaces.

Later in the year the council announced a consultation on cost savings which included grounds maintenance. The document stated that the council had received complaints from residents and visitors which has led them to review it 'with a view to reduce costs while delivering a targeted service enhancement'. The council also stated that they wanted to work with community groups 'to explore jointly prioritised plans for key locations across the town.'

The section on grounds maintenance in the papers put to the council's Cabinet meeting on 13 November included the comment: 'The most frequently suggested idea by respondents to the consultation was to collaborate with the established, significant, and hard-working community and volunteers groups across the town to deliver against shared priorities in key areas.'

The phrase 'singing off the same hymn sheet' may be rather hackneyed but comes immediately to mind. It is clear that everyone involved recognises the need to prepare a list of priorities. We are particularly proud to say that this has been a relatively easy task for us. We have as a basis the Action Plan and updates added throughout the year drawn up by our Committee member Anne McWilliams. Many of those actions have been taken by our volunteers. From that plan we have been able to produce a list of those priorities, which particularly need the input of Idverde, which we now share with you.

## List of priorities for the parks and gardens within our remit which need the input of Idverde

### Priority 1:

- Contractor to keep grass cut in all parks and gardens
- Contractor to regularly remove green waste

### Priority 2

- All Saints Park
  - Contractor to remove three dead trees including all roots. Missing trees to be replaced.
  - Other beds to be weeded by FMPG

### Priority 3

- The Helen Garden
  - Contractor to remove the triangular bed at the entrance nearest the kiosk and grass it over as it is now obstructing views of the sea with very large flax plants.
  - Narrow bed in front of the play area to be cleared
  - Several beds to be pruned back as they are blocking views of the sea, including the elderflowers, which do not appear to have ever been pruned.
  - Other beds to be weeded by FMPG

### Priority 4

- The Italian Gardens
  - Holywell Brow
    - Contractor to remove/cut back rogue sycamores in this area, some of which are growing over the handrails causing a health and safety hazard
  - Raised bed at the entrance to be maintained by FMPG

### Priority 5

- Peace Garden and the Wish Tower
  - Contractor to regularly cut back vegetation along the top of the walls
  - Remainder of the garden to be maintained by FMPG

Council officers are now meeting with each Friends group to go through their respective lists. Our meeting took place on 2 December. All lists will be collated and presented to Lee Banner, EBC's Assistant Director – Neighbourhood and Transformation. We will be closely monitoring progress and keep the membership updated through subsequent newsletters.

We would like to take this opportunity of thanking John Swingland and Anne McWilliams for their exceptional contribution to this aspect of our work and a huge thank you to all our volunteers. We are getting very favourable comments from visitors saying how much better the parks are looking for which the weeding parties can be justifiably proud.

The weeding parties working mainly in The Helen Garden and All Saints Park are led by John Swingland, ably assisted by regulars Jane Swingland, Martin and Denise Walsh, Jennie Embling, Shirley Bayliss, Rod Steel, Melvin Bunce, and Peter Storey and others.

Anne McWilliams looks after the Peace Garden, with help from Julia Lee, and Catherine and Charlie Oades.

If you would like to join them when work starts again in the spring, please email John Swingland at [johnswingland@gmail.com](mailto:johnswingland@gmail.com)

When you are in the Peace Garden or looking back up the hill to the Wish Tower, you may notice that the very ugly piece of mesh fencing, which safeguarded the rusty gate, has now been removed. It has been replaced with fencing of a more sensible height, which does not obscure the iconic skyline of the Wish Tower. The photographs below speak volumes.



Many thanks to Tyler Mortimer Wise and Roman Wanionek (pictured above) for organising this.

### [Another council cost saving proposal which impacts on our parks](#)

The closure of all public toilets, with the exception of those near the bandstand, and the moving towards a community toilet scheme proved to be highly controversial.

A petition launched by the Friends of Eastbourne Seafront against the proposal gathered over 6,000 signatures. We were relieved to hear the news that the toilets at Holywell were to remain open but were still concerned about the planned closure of the toilets in The Helen Garden.

Both the Friends, the Meads Community Association and St John's Bowling Club voiced this concern to the council. We emphasised the fact that the toilets are used not only by visitors to the park but also by the thousands of people accessing the South Downs Way every year. This has resulted in the council talking to the owners of Cadence, the café located in the kiosk, with a view to them taking over the responsibility of maintaining the toilets. Again, we are closely monitoring this situation and will keep you updated.

### [Replacement of the sign in the Peace Garden](#)

Work has been delayed on this until the spring. Fitting the new sign to the existing supports is a specialist job which will be undertaken by Rivermeade, the company who are making the sign. This is to be paid for from the funds passed on to the Friends by the Civilian War Memorial Trust.



## Eastbourne Local Lottery

We are taking this opportunity to thank Committee member George Collier who took on the task of focusing on our participation in this scheme and spreading the word, mainly via our Facebook page. As a result of his efforts, we now have 20 supporters buying 45 tickets which means that this year we have received £1,106.50 from those who have taken part and named the Friends as their chosen good cause.

If others would like to join them, they would, of course, be most welcome. Taking part in the Local Lottery is a great way to support us and, who knows, you could get lucky...

## Friends of Meads Parks and Gardens merchandise

We made the decision last year to produce various items that we would sell on our stalls during events, particularly at Meads Magic, all of which our limited editions featuring images of our parks. Our tea towels have sold well and this year we have produced a series of six greeting cards which have been left blank for your own message and cost £5 a set. The chosen images are shown below.



If you would like to order a set, please email [terrierintoul@hotmail.com](mailto:terrierintoul@hotmail.com) or phone her on 07766 524520 and she will arrange payment and delivery.

## A date for your diary – Saturday 24 May 2025

In common with many other community groups, we changed the date of our Annual General Meeting to September as a result of the Covid pandemic. We are taking the opportunity of letting members know that we have moved the date back to the first half of the year. It will take place on Saturday 24 May in the newly refurbished Meads Hall starting at 2.00pm. We look forward to as many members as possible joining us.

## Continuing to support the Friends

We know that 2025 will be a challenging year for all Friends of parks groups and we very much hope that you will continue to support us by renewing your membership.

For those that renew annually, please do so by 31 December 2024.

Our founder members may wish to make a voluntary donation which would be greatly appreciated.

Please complete and return the form accompanying this newsletter.

If you have friends, family or perhaps a neighbour who you feel would be interested in joining us, please spread the word.

It is now possible to join online: <http://www.friendsofmeadsparksandgardens.co.uk>

A final note to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year. We also hope you enjoy the image below of the magnificent cedar in All Saints Park in snow taken by Caroline Poulton.

Your FMPG Committee:

Alasdair Rintoul, Anne McWilliams, George Collier, Ian Geddes, Jan Smart, John Swingland  
Neil Cumming, and Terrie Rintoul.

