

The Friends of Rowntree Park and other groups linked to the park

There is still some confusion about FRP remit and responsibilities. Below is some information on council responsibilities, the FRP and also other groups such as the cafe and Tennis Club.

The City of York Council manages Rowntree Park. Therefore they have overall responsibility. They do basic maintenance (litter collections, grass cutting, hedge cutting etc) and also oversee the toilets, playpark, skate park, basketball courts, flooding, lakes, opening and closing etc. They use contractors for some things such as the toilets and opening and closing of the park. The council no longer really plant or develop new displays/features in the park - they maintain what is there.

The Friends of Rowntree Park are a charity that relies on volunteers to help maintain some areas of the park, help improve the physical space, run education and mental health and well being programmes as well as run projects and events for the community. The FRP are the people's link with the council - we report issues and pass on queries and concerns from our members then feedback. We are funded through membership and the events we run. We also get some grants and donations at various times. We have specific areas we garden and care for BUT we do not and cannot look after all areas to be gardened.

There is a travelling team of CYC maintenance workers who go to CYC parks. They are not based in a certain park and most of the time there are no CYC in the park. The council has an 'Environment and Community Team' which consists of 4 members who work across the city to engage community groups in caring for parks and open spaces. They offer support and tools. The ECO team also brings in workplace volunteer teams from time to time - this means work places give employees a volunteer day and they come and help in the park. Due to council budget cuts over recent years, there is more reliance on volunteers like the FRP and work based volunteering for looking after the park. These are jobs once done by the gardeners employed in Rowntree Park. The last park based employee was the park keeper who was made redundant in 2017.

Cafe and Tennis Club

There is clearly still a little misunderstanding of the distinction between the Friends of Rowntree Park and the Cafe and Tennis Club. We are separate entities all based in the park.

A couple of people commented on the cafe being great (which it is, but not due to us) and also that we should share news from the tennis club. It's important that the role of the Friends is clear to members...

The cafe is run by York Explore Libraries - this is the group that runs York's library service. In some cities/counties the council still runs libraries, but not in York. Explore rent the space from the council at a 'peppercorn rate' (which means

nominal). By supporting the cafe means you support York Explore, a worthy organisation, not the FRP. The money the cafe makes does not go into the work the FRP does in the park. It also means the FRP can't really use the cafe as an events space as the primary aim of the space is a cafe/library. However, occasionally we can use the space but this is for special events but it is not our venue or one we can utilise a lot as an organisation. The space is not a community events space - it's a cafe and a library. York Explore have their own charitable aims and financial needs.

Rowntree Park Tennis Club is also separate to the FRP. The Tennis club leases the courts from the council at a 'peppercorn rate'. The club is keeping the courts maintained. Those who pay to be members of the club or pay to use the courts are paying the tennis club and this helps them maintain the courts and do the things they do. The money here doesn't not go into the rest of Rowntree Park or to the work of the Friends.

Therefore it is really down to York Explore (the cafe) and the Tennis Club to communicate their own activities and events and they do not come under the FRP. However, we do share things from time to time when we are informed. We have a good relationship with the cafe manager and staff in Rowntree Park and we do support one another when able. We don't have much communication with the Tennis Club leadership at present though hope this will improve as we move forward.