

Present: The Chairman, Councillor Sam Evans
The Vice Chairman, Councillor D Nimmo Smith
Councillor D Eggleton
Councillor Miss Kellie Hinton
Councillor Sarah Miller
Mr D Bancroft – River and Rowing Museum
Mrs S Rankin – Henley Wildlife Group

In Attendance: Mr G Bartle – Parks Service Manager
Mrs B Walker – Minute Taker

Also Present: 3 members of the public
1 member of the press

27. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mr C Baker.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

29. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

Mr James Barr – Representative of Park Run UK – Minute number 33 – spoke in favour of setting up a Park Run for adults (5 km) held on a Sunday and/or a children's run (2km) held on a Saturday in Henley. To date neither the Town Council nor Mr Barr had identified a suitable location however he hoped this initiative could progress.

Mr Tony May – 11 Leicester Close - Minute 35 - Provision of Amenities at Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground - Mr May explained his house backed on to Freemans Meadow and that Leicester Close is mainly inhabited by older residents who valued the peace and tranquillity of Freemans Meadow.

Mr Peter Lloyd - shortly to move into Leicester Close – Minute 35 – Provision of Amenities at Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground – Mr Lloyd described Freemans Meadow as a green oasis in a very busy area and he would think nearly all of the 50 houses, which surround the Meadow would be anxious that it continue to be maintained as a relatively quiet area and felt converting any part of this area to parking would be a sad use of the land. He also felt there would be many problems associated with the provision of tennis courts. Mr Lloyd was in favour of the proposals to brighten up the area with planting, improving/extending the playground and to create some sort of pleasant attractive walk way around, what can be, quite a boggy area.

30. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Parks Sub Committee held on 9 October 2015 were received, approved and adopted and were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

31. MOORING AND CAR PARKING – MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

The Sub Committee received and considered the management accounts for Mill Meadows to 31 December 2015 and agreed they looked healthy.

The Committee **RESOLVED**

that the management accounts to 31 December 2015 be noted.

32. HENLEY CANOE HIRE

The Sub Committee received and considered a proposal from Henley Canoe Hire to have a base at Mill Meadows during the spring/summer to enable visitors to hire canoes. Members noted this item was referred to the Parks Sub Committee by the Recreation and Amenities Committee (19.1.16) for further consideration particularly with regards to commercial activity on the Meadows.

Members welcomed the proposer Mr Matthew Couling of Henley Canoe Hire to the meeting.

The Chairman summarised the discussions to date and made the following comments:-

- concern was raised regarding the commercialisation of the Meadows and whether, if permission was given, a precedent would be set. After discussions with past and present members of the Town Council the Chairman could not find an example of any proposal being approved on the basis of precedent and every request is judged on its own merits
- the Town Council has a clear vision for the Meadows as outlined in the extract below from the Mill and Marsh Meadows Management Plan:-

“The area comprising Mill and Marsh Meadows is a beautiful, riverside amenity, open to all, providing a free and safe quality recreational opportunity for visitors of all ages and abilities. Our vision is to enhance and improve this wonderful green space and to build on our track record of providing a sustainable, accessible mix of formal and natural areas for the enjoyment of local residents and visitors alike”.

Approved by the Mill Meadows and River Sub Committee - 11 September 2012

- the proposal is in-keeping with the Town Council’s vision as it enables use of one of riverside park’s natural features and provides an additional recreational activity for visitors
- the Chairman feared if the Town Council says no to this proposal another nearby riverside town may benefit from this initiative rather than Henley
- regarding the commercial aspect – there has been very positive feedback on recent events held on the Meadows eg the Pop Up Cinema and people have enjoyed having the opportunity to attend
- regarding the visual impact of the proposal. Mr Couling is very keen to work with the Town Council to find the right type of structure and has agreed to use the Henley green

Members had a general discussion and a question and answer session with Mr Couling and the following comments were made:-

- it was acknowledged a balance is required between not commercialising the Meadows yet still offering opportunities eg to use the river in a new way
- the aesthetics of the structure is of the utmost importance. It must be visible but unobtrusive and needs to blend in. It was noted the proposer is willing to work with the Council on finding a suitable structure so that a solution which all parties agree to can be found
- it is important to encourage visitors to use the river as it is so fundamental to Henley
- the proposal offers interesting partnership opportunities which should be encouraged eg the Quince Tree offering picnics/hampers
- the Town Council does not have a policy re commercialisation on the Meadows however acknowledged each request is considered on its own merits
- it was confirmed the River and Rowing Museum were willing to enter into agreement with Henley Canoe Hire to park the trailer with the canoes in their car park at night
- members queried the safety aspects on this busy part of the Thames. Mr M Couling confirmed Henley Canoe Hire adhered to all the required safety guidelines. Mr Couling assured members Henley Canoe Hire have had no people fall in the river since the business started 2 years ago. Mr Couling advised he has all the necessary qualifications also he had a licence allowing him to take under 18s out on the river.
- Mr Couling informed members that the canoes they use are the widest on the market with a specially designed keel to offer the best stability. New canoes are bought at the beginning of each season. It was acknowledged there is an element of risk however Henley Canoe Hire take all steps to mitigate this risk.

The Sub Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that Mr M Couling of the Henley Canoe Hire be asked to attend the next Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting and provide illustrations of different types of structure for the Town Council's approval

that, subject to the approval of the structure, Henley Canoe Hire be permitted to operate canoe hire from Mill Meadows on a year's trial subject to:-

- **community engagement with local schools and colleges**
- **a suitable fee being negotiated**

Post meeting note: Mr Ludo Keston, Chief Executive of the River and Rowing Museum has emailed to clarify that the River and Rowing Museum has no objections to the operation subject to the Town Council believing the structure is appropriate and as long it is not located directly in front of the Museum and thereby obstructing their view

33. USE OF THE PARKS

- i Members received and noted the calendar of events on Mill and Marsh Meadows, Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground to date and also noted a new combined leaflet will be produced in 2016 detailing events at Mill Meadows and band performances.

The Committee **RESOLVED**

that the calendar of events at Mill Meadows be noted

- ii. The Committee received and considered an update on the two proposed theatre productions at Mill Meadows in 2016 as follows:-

a. Reading Between the Lines Theatre Company (RBL) Production:

Twelfth Night

Performance Dates: Thursday 16 - Saturday 25 June 2016 (9 performances – not Sunday)

Times: 7.30 – 10pm

Get-in, Tech & Dress: Tuesday 14 June

Performance Area: Putting Green, Mill Meadows

Ticket Pricing: £20 full /£16 discount /£9 per school pupil (picnics encouraged)

Agreed: 10% Box Office Split

**Bar supplied and run by RBL*

Community Engagement:

RBL in full agreement to engage fully with local Community Groups with HTC:

- Offer Henley College Drama students an Internship package
- Produce Education Packs, encouraging local schools to engage with Shakespeare
- Tweet Night – encouraging Young People to engage with performance and characters
- Pay What You Want Night – encouraging low income & students
- Henley Theatre Service to supply lighting and sound equipment
- The Head Partnership is one of their sponsors
- HTC will promote production through the HTC Magazine ,the new combined 'Summer at Mill Meadows Programme 2016' and Visit Henley website

b. Bart Lee Theatre Group (BLTG)

Production: Hooray Mr Toad !

Performance Dates: Tuesday 2 - Sunday 7 August 2016 (approx. 10 performances)

Times: various – 11am, 4pm & 7.30pm performance - tbc

Performance Area: Putting Green, Mill Meadows

Ticket Pricing: tbc (picnics encouraged)

Agreed fee: 10% Box Office Split - tbc

Community Engagement:

BLTG in full agreement to engage fully with local Community Groups in partnership with HTC:

- Collaborate with RRM on marketing and promotion
- Develop existing relationship with Kenton Theatre to promote this production
- Promote production to local schools during the summer term
- Ticket discount to Henley residents
- HTC will promote production through the HTC Magazine ,the new combined 'Summer at Mill Meadows Programme 2016' and Visit Henley website

Members noted the two theatre companies are very appreciative of the opportunity to bring their productions to Henley's riverside park.

The Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the update be noted

- iii The Sub Committee received and considered a request from Helen Cook, Head of Learning of the River Rowing Museum (RRM) to hold a sports orientated family fun day on the Meadows on Thursday 18 August 2016 between 10.30 am and 4 pm.

The Chairman provided additional information as follows:-

- the day will be free with Museum admission ie visitors should have a museum ticket to attend however it is acknowledged that with many events being held on the Meadows it may be difficult to enforce this
- there will be activities in the Museum and out on Marsh Meadows but probably not Mill Meadows as it may be busy at that time of year.
- investigations are being made as to whether bowling can take place at the Bowling Club.
- depending on which local clubs are available to participate, the RRM are hoping to offer timed slots to try out different sports eg football, hockey, gymnastics, rugby, cricket and golf. The RRM would also like to offer timed slots for taster sessions in canoeing, rowing and dragon boat racing from the Museum's jetty.
- the possibility of a climbing wall in the Museum Car Park is also being investigated

A member expressed concern re golf however acknowledged the RRM would carry out the required risk assessments.

The Sub Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that permission be given in principle to the River and Rowing Museum holding a sports orientated fun day on Marsh Meadows on Thursday 18 August 2016 subject to:-

- **further details being supplied in due course to this Sub Committee or the Town Clerk if there are timing constraints**
- **the Parks Manager assessing the ground conditions on Marsh Meadows the week prior to the event**

- iv. Member considered Mr James Barr's comments in the public participation session and the Chairman suggested an informal meeting be arranged with Mr Barr to discuss finding a suitable location. A member reiterated previous concerns that the Park Run should not be held at Gillotts Field (Town Green).

The Committee **RESOLVED**

that Councillor Sam Evans and Councillor Sarah Miller meet with Mr James Barr (Park Run UK representative) to discuss suitable locations in Henley to hold an adult Park Run (5km – Sunday morning) and/or a children Park Run (2km – Saturday morning)

34. SIGNAGE AND FLAGPOLES AT MILL MEADOWS

- i. The Sub Committee received a verbal update from the Chairman regarding the signage at Mill Meadows and a revised quote following a site meeting and discussions on the content of the maps, welcome and information boards. The revised quote totals £5285 and includes the Signage System Design element (£725) which will lay out the guidelines for the Town Council's signage incorporating the new "H" branding. It was noted this element of the quote, along with the location map, could be spread over different budgets as the branding is rolled out.

A member queried whether there would be a complimentary board including the map in the town centre to improve the connectivity of the town and the Meadows and the river. Members noted that it was important to have a co-ordinated approach to the re-signing and re-branding in the town.

The Sub Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that an additional £3285 be allocated from the Recreational Improvements budget to progress the design of new signage at Mill/Marsh Meadows including a map of the Meadows, a location map, information board and a welcome board

that in order to ensure consistency, the re-signage of the Meadows is considered in association with complimentary signage and re-branding in the town centre to improve the connectivity between the town centre, the Meadows/parks in the town and the allocation of the costs is considered as the project progresses

- ii. The Sub Committee received and considered a report regarding the provision of one or more flagpoles at Mill Meadows to promote the town and events. This item was referred to the Parks Sub Committee by the Recreation and Amenities Committee (19.1.16) for more detailed consideration.

Members discussed the proposal and made the following comments:-

- flag poles would be too dominant along the riverside– banners maybe more appropriate which would be more "soft focus"
- flag poles may be more appropriate elsewhere in the park eg along the hedge by the celebration beds
- alternative sites were suggested to "welcome" visitors to the town eg Singers Park or the New Street slipway and continue the welcome along the river
- the flagpoles are not permanent structures and will be removed when not in use

- there is the potential to work with Festivals and organisations in the town
- potential sites need to be identified and a “walk round the town “ was suggested bearing in mind trees in leaf may obscure the flagpoles in summer
- a staged approach could be adopted to installing flagpoles

The Sub Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that Councillors Sarah Miller, Councillor David Eggleton and David Bancroft visit potential sites and a report/suggestions/photos be brought to the next Recreation and Amenities Committee

35. PROVISION OF AMENITIES AT FREEMANS MEADOW AND MAKINS RECREATION GROUND

- i. The Sub Committee received and considered the results of the consultation process recently undertaken regarding the facilities at Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground.

The Chairman thanked all those who took part in the consultation (of which there were almost 100) for their considered observations and suggestions – all of which had been passed to the Landscape Architect who produced the report to be considered next.

It was noted over half the respondents were in support of the skateboard park at Makins Recreation Ground.

Members noted dog fouling was a common complaint in both parks. Members agreed the provision of bins was not the issue it was more an attitude of mind and noted litter was identified as a priority in the Corporate Plan and dog fouling is a form of litter. The Chairman advised she would speak to Inspector Harling to ask for his advice and to see if he was aware of how other towns dealt with this issue.

The Sub Committee **RESOLVED**

that the results of the consultation be noted

- ii. The Sub Committee received and considered a preliminary report from Dr Carolyn Jenkins, Landscape Architect (Reading Borough Council) regarding possible improvements to Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground.

The Chairman believed the report showed great potential for these sites. Regarding the costs, the Chairman highlighted that this is a 3 ½ year plan and there is the possibility of grant funding from a number of sources.

Members discussed the report as follows:-

Makins Recreation Ground

The Chairman explained the report “zones” areas of usage at Makins to enable everyone to make the best use of the park as follows:-

- younger users - the top (west) section – extension of the playground for toddler and junior play, picnic tables and additional seating
- the middle section – a 5 a side grass football pitch
- the lower (eastern) section – skate park, table tennis and ground level trampoline
- a new footpath around the area and additional seating and bins
- an area was identified as having the best views and seating to be provided in this area
- 1m high bow-top fencing along the top of the steep slope along the northern boundary
- liaison to take place with the Henley Skatpark Initiative to ensure a co-ordinated approach to any developments
- Makins is identified as the most suitable location for the outdoor gym equipment to be sited (around the perimeter of the site)

It was noted bulbs along the Greys Road embankment may not be appropriate as wildflowers are being encouraged in this area.

Freemans Meadow

Members noted the plans for Freemans Meadow are less comprehensive as there are a number of key decisions to be made, eg whether provision of parking should be investigated and the provision of tennis courts.

Members discussed the proposals and made the following comments:-

- there is no car parking on site which may explain why this area is not as well used as Makins
- there are a number of issues re providing parking at Freemans eg use by local residents rather than visitors, the access on to the road
- the Henley Rugby Club car park is very close to Freemans and this could be promoted to help encourage use of the park
- the views of nearby residents needs to be taken into account
- sustainable and perennial planting be investigated further
- from the aerial map the proximity of Rupert House School's tennis courts are apparent and the Chairman advised she is to meet with the Head Teacher of Rupert House School to investigate the possible municipal use of this area
- Freemans Meadow does not have a group of volunteers which Makins Recreation Ground benefits from and this should be encouraged. It was suggested a letter be sent to local residents and utilising any offers of support from the consultation process

The Chairman advised, in order to progress the improvements to these 2 parks, a professional partner would be required. Dr Carolyn Jenkins has provided the plans to date. Dr Jenkins has considerable experience in designing public parks. Also, as an officer of Reading Borough Council, she understands working for a public body and has the benefit of being able to call upon colleagues with specialist expertise eg playground management. Also the rates charged are likely to be more favourable than in the private sector as fees would be paid to Reading Borough Council. The Chairman asked members, based on the information/proposals provided to date, to consider whether to appoint Dr Jenkins to progress the plans or to seek an alternative professional partner.

Members received and considered possible reserves earmarked for recreational improvements as prepared by the Town Council's accountant, Mrs Liz Jones as follows:-

- **“Operation Parks”** - £50,000 as at 31 March 2016 with £25,000 being added each year – set up to replace play equipment in all parks. Makins equipment was last replaced in 2006/07, Freemans in 2008/09, Mill Meadows Adventure playground in 2008/09 so chronologically Makins should be first for refurbishment
- **Recreational Improvements** £40,000 as at 31 March – no specific expenditure identified however maybe used for the Mill Meadows re-signage project
- **Adult Gym Equipment** - £10,000 as at 31 March 2016
- **Fencing at Makins** - £21,937 as at 31 March 2016
- **Tennis Courts** - £50,000 as at 31 March 2015
- **Enhancement to Makins Recreation Ground and Freemans Meadow** - £50,000 in 2016/17 and 2017/19 (subject to Council approval for 2017/18)

The Sub Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that Dr Carolyn Jenkins be formally appointed to progress the proposed improvements to Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground and that the fee structure eg investigation /design, putting together bids, project management etc be brought to the next Recreation and Amenities Committee meeting for further consideration

that, subject to appointment, Dr Jenkins be asked to provide more formal plans and costs in order for a 3 ½ year phased plan to be developed

that in order to progress this project in a timely manner a Working Group (Parks Improvements Working Group) be set up – the Terms of Reference to include:-

- **membership to be all members of the Parks Sub Committee and Councillor W Hamilton be asked if he would like to join the group**
- **the quorum to be 3 members**
- **identify the priorities and investigate budget allocation for 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19**
- **to report to the Parks Sub Committee**

that Councillor Miss Kellie Hinton contact residents of properties surrounding Freemans Meadow with a view to forming an informal group who share a common interest in the area and who may like to be involved in the improvements/projects

that the Chairman, Councillor S Evans, continue liaison with the Henley Rugby Club regarding possible ways to encourage use of Freemans Meadow by utilising the parking at their car park

Mrs Sally Rankin thanked the Town Council for the grant towards the pond renovation work at Marsh Meadows. The Henley Wildlife Group have been wanting to undertake this work for a number of years and they feel it will increase the educational value of the area.

36. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was set as Friday 22 April 2016 at 9.00 am.

The meeting ended at 11 am.

bw

Chairman