

- Present:** The Chairman, Councillor Kellie Hinton
The Vice Chairman, Councillor Sarah Miller
Councillor Donna Crook
Councillor Dave Eggleton
Councillor Laurence Plant
- Helen Gaynor – Friends of Freeman’s & Northfield End and Bell Street Residents Group
Sally Rankin – Henley Wildlife Group
- In Attendance:** Karl Bishop – Acting Parks Manager
Kyle Dowling - Senior Park Warden/Horticultural Park Warden
Ilona Livarski – Conservation Park Warden
Becky Walker – Acting Estates Manager
Janet Munro-Nelson--Administrator
- Also Present:** 3 members of the public
1 member of the press

21. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Sam Evans, Janet Wheeler (Town Clerk) and Lynne Adams (River and Rowing Museum).

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

23. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

Peter Lloyd – Leicester Close – Minute 25 – Freeman’s Meadow – Improvements
Mr Lloyd advised he was delighted the Committee were considering co-opting Helen Gaynor on to the Committee and felt it would help progress the already excellent relationship between the Town Council and Friends of Freemans (FofF). Mr Lloyd noted the legal aspect of the protection of Freemans as a Town Green is being investigated.

Regarding the improvements to the playground, Mr Lloyd felt the plans for the improvements should not be constrained by having to keep to the same footprint (20 x 25m) as this may restrict more imaginative plans. He advised an increase of 10 m in both directions would in effect double the size and would be acceptable.

24. MINUTES

Minute 11 –Freeman’s Meadow – Town/Village Green Status - The Chairman thanked Mr Tony May for suggesting the possibility of registering Freeman’s as a Town Green which may not have been investigated otherwise.

The Sub Committee received, approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Open and Green Spaces Sub Committee held on 13 July 2018 and were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

25. CO-OPTION OF MEMBERS

Members considered co-opting Helen Gaynor (member of the Friends of Freeman's and the Northfield End and Bell Street Residents Group) on to the Open and Green Spaces Sub Committee.

Members were pleased to welcome Mrs Gaynor to the Committee and **RESOLVED**

that Helen Gaynor be co-opted on to the Open and Green Spaces Sub Committee

26. FREEMAN'S MEADOW – IMPROVEMENTS

i. Members received and considered a report regarding the purchase of a new double swing set and resurfacing underneath at Freeman's Meadow. The costs varied between £7,665 and £11,273.

It was advised that a supplier had now been found for replacement swings which will fit the current swing set and for refurbishing the swings (painting, new swing cradle seats and chains and improved surfacing) at a cost of £6,600. Also a fifth quote for a new swing set and improved surfacing at a cost of £9,000.

After discussion members agreed it would be preferable to have a new swing set installed as the current set was 24 years old and new standards have been introduced regarding the distance between the swing and the side bars. A new swing set would comply with these standards and would also have anti-wrap bearings on the swings.

After discussion it was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the Town Council purchase a double swing set with two flat seats and two cradle swings (or one cradle and one combined), a wet pour base and installation to come from ear-marked reserves as indicated above, subject to FSM approval (on 4 December 2018)

that delegated powers be given to the Town Clerk, the Acting Parks Manager, the Chair of Recreation and Amenities Committee, Councillor Donna Crook, and Helen Gaynor to analyse the quotes and choose the one which provides best value for money, guarantees and quality

The Chairman advised that it may be easier to liaise by email rather than by meeting to allow the order of swings in a timely manner.

ii. Members received and considered a report regarding the improvements to Freeman's Meadow and the upgrade of the playground and noted the following progress had been made:-

- | | |
|--|--|
| - Children's playground upgrade | See below |
| - Mowing | Parks Service are mowing every 2 weeks (subject to weather and staffing) |
| - Planting hedging on Leicester Close boundary | FofF (Friends of Freemans) and Parks Service to plant – 21 November 2018 |
| - Removal of concrete bases | Completed |

- Planting of Orchard by Pearce's Orchard/Fairmile Court	FofF and Parks Service to plant – 14 November 2018
- Install 5 aside goals	Goals on order (12 foot x 6 foot)
- New swing set	Researched – see above
- Install 2 Big Ben bins	Completed
- Plant shrub by Northfield End and on vehicular access	Shrub (photinia) on vehicle access is on order – to be planted on 21 November 2018. More research needed regarding types of shrub that will survive by Fairmile entrance as it is a shaded and dry position.
- Removal of Ball shoot	Completed
Additional items	
- Planting of a tree on Fairmile Court (southern boundary)/ Freemans boundary to fill gap	Cotoneaster has been ordered. To be planted by FofF and Parks Service on volunteer days
- Installation of benches	FofF to advise on preferred location of benches

Helen Gaynor advised the FofF are totally happy with the progress already made and thanked all those involved for the tremendous effort.

Councillor Eggleton advised that if the FofF form a Committee (with a Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary) they may be eligible for funding and help from the South Oxfordshire Housing Association and agreed to share the contact details with Helen Gaynor.

Improvements to the Playground

The Chairman advised the current playground, installed in 2008, contained equipment for older children as it was fully funded by the Playbuilder fund which was aimed at 8 to 13 year olds.

Members agreed equipment for toddlers (possibly fenced in its own area) was required and this was backed up by consultation undertaken by the FofF last year. Members also specified that sensory and inclusive equipment was required. It was noted that there is a lot of natural sensory stimulation at Freeman's.

Members noted consideration could be given to removing certain pieces of equipment which had not aged well, were difficult to maintain and/or were not as popular – further investigation to be undertaken with users and the Parks Manager. It was acknowledged the area could be expanded to accommodate more equipment however the “natural, passive and aesthetic” nature of the park should be borne in mind.

To progress the project in a timely manner the report suggested delegated powers be given to the next Recreation and Amenities Committee (22 January 2019) to approve the brief to be placed on Contracts Finder rather than Full Council approval on 5 March 2019

After discussion it was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the play area be extended sufficiently to include equipment for the younger age range (toddlers) and further

investigation be carried out into the removal of any existing pieces

that a brief be drawn up for Contracts Finder for improvements to the playground at Freeman's Meadow to include:-

- **equipment for a wider age range – including toddlers**
- **variety of equipment (the equipment is currently spin heavy)**
- **fencing for all or part of the playground (toddler area)**
- **wet pour (or similar) to include traditional games eg hopscotch**
- **options to change the current surface**
- **sensory equipment**
- **a multi-play unit with a slide**
- **inclusive equipment**
- **seating**
- **to fit into the aesthetics of the Meadow**

that in order to ensure the progression of this project in a timely manner delegated powers be given to the Recreation and Amenities Committee (22.1.19) to approve the brief to be placed on Contracts Finder

that a budget limit be set at the next FSM meeting following advice from the Accountant and a report

The Chairman thanked for the FofF for all their work on the above projects.

27. NORTHFIELD END GREEN

Members received and considered a report by Helen Gaynor on behalf of the Northfield End Green Group (NEGG) regarding the improvements to Northfield End Green and the proposed timetable.

Helen Gaynor advised that the tree (Photinia Red Robin) had been planted which will provide a back drop to the new shrub bed and to obscure the rear of the traffic sign. The report also noted that the tree had taken on an historic and symbolic meaning and was planted in commemoration of the 100 year anniversary of the Armistice of World War 1 partly due to the timing of the planting, and also because of a number of photos showing troops from the 2nd Battalion of the Oxfordshire and Bucks Light Infantry resting on the Green in September 1913. A Ceremony to mark the commemoration took place on Saturday 3 November 2018.

Helen Gaynor also advised that plans to plant the shrub bed were in place. The bed will comprise of approx. 75 – 100 shrubs including Hebe, Pittosporum, Sarcococca, Heathers, Dwarf Spiraea, Phormium, Cornus (Midwinter fire and Alba), Photinia Little Red Robin, Heuchera, Lavender, Nepeta, Ceratostigma and Vinca. Martyn Sheldrake of Toad Hall Garden Centre and Kyle Dowling have designed the bed. The planting will be undertaken by the Parks Department with the help of residents in the spring. Residents will plant a variety of bulbs including Alliums and Tulips and also tend to and weed the bed during the winter.

Sally Rankin asked that consideration be given to including shrubs and bulbs which are native species (eg wild daffodils) and that are beneficial to wildlife.

Helen Gaynor thanked Karl Bishop, Kyle Dowling and Becky Walker for their collaborative work on this project.

Helen Gaynor asked the Committee to consider purchasing a noticeboard to replace the current noticeboard and asked if use of the noticeboard could be divided between Town Council use and community use. The NEGG would be happy to take responsibility for keeping the community section of the noticeboard updated. Mrs Gaynor also asked if the Town Council would consider the provision of “plaque” or notice telling the story of the symbolic dedication of the tree in commemoration of the centenary of the 1918 Armistice. The “notice” ideally to be placed in the new noticeboard. A request was also received for lights to be placed in the tree once it is established.

After discussion it was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that a new noticeboard be purchased for Northfield End Green – half to be used by the Town Council and half to be used for the community (administered by the Northfield End Green Group)

that a “plaque” or a “notice” be designed by NEGG telling the story of the symbolic dedication of the tree in commemoration of the 1918 Armistice ideally to be placed in the new noticeboard

that once the tree is established permanent lights be placed in the tree (in time for Christmas 2019) subject to budget and permissions

28. HENLEY WILDLIFE AREAS AND OPEN SPACES

i. Members received a verbal report from **Sally Rankin of the Henley Wildlife Group** (HWG)/Henley in Transition regarding the Town Council’s wildlife areas as follows:-

- thanked the Town Council for recruiting Ilona Livarski as the Conservation Park Warden and it has been very beneficial to work with someone on the wildlife areas and feels as a result all the areas will improve. Recent work undertaken has included:-
 - cutting and raking of wildlife area at Mill Meadows
 - supervising the Community Payback clearing areas
- stocks of the Wildlife Trail leaflet to be checked and if low re-printing to be organised possibly with amendments (including QR codes) and to be available on line
- possibility of a circular walk leaflet combining the Valley Road Chalk Bank and Tilebarn Wood. The Chairman suggested working with Walkers are Welcome on this project.

The Chairman thanked Sally Rankin for her work and it was **RESOLVED**

that the above update be noted

ii. Members received a report from Ilona Livarski, **Conservation Park Warden**, regarding the Town Council’s wildlife areas, on-going and new projects. Ilona Livarski spoke to the report and the following points were made:-

- **Gillotts Field** – cut and removed sections of Gillotts Field to help orchids and wildflowers grow next year, footpaths were cleared of encroaching brambles using a power scythe and investigation made into laying the hedge next year. There was a lot of interest from members of the public and information notices were put up to explain the work undertaken.

- **Chalk Bank** – 2 wildlife signs have been replaced, footpaths cut back, brambles and nettles cleared, trees have been surveyed by Reading Borough Council
- **Conservation Instagram account** set up – “HTC Conservation”

Upcoming Projects

- **Green Gym and Parks Service** to repair steps from Makins to Waterworks Lane in November
- **I Spy** – developing an I Spy style/Treasure Hunt leaflet for children at Mill Meadows focused on wildlife (possibly seasonal)
- **Planting new hedge at Makins**

Sally Rankin added that the works carried out at Gillotts Field is helping plants which are on the Oxfordshire Threatened Plants list – eg pyramidal orchid, fox and cubs, Sally reiterated how important it is to collect cut grass to encourage wildflowers and asked if the Town Council had considered buying equipment to help with this as raking takes the time.

Tree Planting - Sally asked if investigation could be made into planting trees in the following areas:-

- an avenue of trees away from the houses at the Chalk Bank.
- top edge of 40 Acre Field

The Chairman thanked Ilona for her hard work and noted a lot had been achieved in a short time. It was **RESOLVED**

that the update be noted

29. HORTICULTURAL UPDATE

Members received a report from Kyle Dowling, Horticulture Park Warden regarding horticultural matters in the town’s parks and open spaces. Kyle spoke to the report and made the following comments:-

- **Northfield End Green** – the tree has been planted, the bed has been created and further soil preparation will take place during the winter.
- **Celebration Beds** – the designs were very effective this year. Due to low volunteer numbers the Parks team took the lead on the design, planting and maintenance. Thanks to be given to Martyn Sheldrake regarding the design of the bed, supplying the plants and for his great help with any questions and information.
- **Community Orchard (Paradise Road)** – the orchard has produced fruit in this its first year. The Parks Service watered during the summer – only one tree was lost and a replacement has been ordered. The final cut of the area has been undertaken and the grass raked up into habitat piles. Chelsea Fringe/Bloom picnic was a great success and various talks were given.
- **Mill Meadows** - Adventure Playground - a new liquid amber tree was planted in the corner nearest the entrance. Tree circles created and borders edged and finished off with bark to suppress weed growth and to keep moisture in. A prunus has been planted and vinca minors (x5) by the noticeboard.
- **Future projects** - new orchard to be planted at Freemans Meadow and in-fill hedging. Lawn renovations at the putting green. Revamp the shrub bed outside the Pavilion.

The Chairman thanked the Parks Service, with Karl Bishop as Acting Parks Manager and Kyle Dowling as Senior Park Warden, for doing a fantastic job this year under difficult circumstances. The results have been better than could have been hoped for. It was **RESOLVED**

that the update be noted

30. MILL AND MARSH MEADOWS – BARBECUE POLICY

Members received and considered whether to extend the ban on barbecues at Marsh Meadows in 2019.

The Parks Manager provided a re-cap of issues regarding barbecues during the summer and advised a ban had been put in place in July due to the hot and dry weather. The ban resulted in less problems with litter etc. A Park Ranger had been employed who helped enforce the ban during the evenings.

A member asked if a designated area could be provided for barbecues rather than a total ban however it was noted that if the area was full visitors may spill over and barbecue elsewhere in the Meadow. Also allowing barbecues in some areas may send a mixed message to visitors.

It was noted if a ban was put in place an additional Park Ranger in the evening would be required to enforce it.

It was suggested a barbecue area could be included into the investigations into a lido or at Makins Recreation Ground.

After discussion it was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the temporary ban on barbecues in Marsh Meadows be extended for 2019

that the ban be reviewed in the autumn and the possibility of having a barbecue area explored

31. MILL MEADOWS - RIVER AND ROWING MUSEUM

The Chairman advised Lynne Adams had sent her apologies due to illness.

32. PROGRESS

Members received the progress report and noted the following items which were now complete and should be removed from the report:-

- Mill Meadows Adventure Playground fencing
- Playground improvements at Makins Recreation Ground
- Outdoor gym equipment at Makins Recreation Ground
- Greys Road embankment signs
- Grass verges opposite Badgemore School

On-going items were noted as follows:-

- Fencing by Brunner Hall has been installed and the hedge is due to be planted in November
- Freeman's Meadow – Town Green Status – FSM is considering this matter

It was **RESOLVED**

that the report be noted

33. MOORING AND CAR PARKING – MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

- i. Members received and considered the management accounts for Mill Meadows up to September 2018.

It was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the management accounts for Mill Meadows up to September 2018 be approved

- ii. Members received and welcomed that the Park Wardens can now take mooring payments by debit and credit cards.

34. MILL MEADOWS – MOORING SURVEY

Members received and noted the results of the mooring survey carried out in June/July 2018.

A member suggested further investigation be made into having a dedicated area for boats from Rod Eyot to moor at Mill Meadows. It was noted the Baths Site does offer this facility and parking on the other side of the river.

A member queried the rules regarding hotel boats and it was suggested this be a future agenda item.

It was **RESOLVED**

that the report be noted

35. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was agreed as **Friday 25 January 2019 at 9.30 am.**

The meeting closed at 11.11 am

bw

Chairman