

**Present:** The Chairman, Councillor Simon Smith  
The Vice-Chairman, Councillor Kellie Hinton  
Councillor Dave Eggleton  
The Mayor, Councillor Lorraine Hillier  
Michaela Clarke  
Caroline Langler

**In Attendance:** Gareth Bartle – Parks Manager  
Becky Walker – Minute Taker

**Also Present:** 1 member of the press

**41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Phil Simms.

**42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None received.

**43. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

None.

**44. MINUTES**

The minutes of the Henley in Bloom and Civic Pride Sub Committee held on 23 September 2015 were received, approved and adopted and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

**45. BRITAIN IN BLOOM/THAMES AND CHILTERN IN BLOOM**

Members received and noted the final marking sheet from this year's Britain in Bloom in which Henley was awarded its first gold. Henley achieved gold in the Horticultural Achievement and Community Participation categories and silver gilt in the Environmental Responsibility category.

Members noted that next year Henley would only take part in the regional Thames and Chilterns in Bloom campaign.

The Parks Manager felt the national and regional awards were a good indication of how far this Council had come from when it first entered the Bloom campaign 11 years ago, and showed the integration between elected members, businesses and volunteers from the community.

The Vice Chairman advised the feedback from the Entente Florale had been received and was distributed to members. The Chairman also advised the Royal Horticultural Society had withdrawn its support for this campaign.

#### **46. BUDGET UPDATE**

The Sub Committee received and considered the management accounts.

The Sub Committee **RESOLVED**

**that the management accounts as received be noted**

The Mayor, Councillor Lorraine Hillier joined the meeting at 9.36am.

#### **47. RESIGNATION FROM THE COMMITTEE**

The Chairman advised members of the resignation from the Sub Committee of Marisa Francini.

The Vice Chairman explained that Marisa had joined the Committee at a time of change with a new Chairman and Administrator and had taken control of the sponsorship structure and completely re-organised it. A big thank you should be extended to Marisa for all her time and work over the last 3 years.

Members felt that her resignation was a great loss and that the Sub Committee would suffer from not having her financial expertise and energy.

The Sub Committee **RESOLVED**

**that thanks be extended to Marisa Francini for her hard work for the Henley in Bloom and Civic Pride Sub Committee particularly with regard to sponsorship**

#### **48. SPONSORSHIP**

i. The Vice Chairman provided an update on sponsorship to date as follows:-

- Higgs Group have decided not to sponsor the planters at Northfield End nor the Gravel Hill flowerbed. Higgs Group currently sponsors the newly refurbished Reading Road roundabout.

It was noted that investigations are being made into improving the Gravel Hill amenity area e.g. re-paving and creating a raised flowerbed to accommodate the tree roots. A budget of approx. £7,500 has been allocated.

The Mayor offered to forward information to a group of landscape gardeners for their suggestions to improve this area including the planting.

ii, Concern was expressed as to how future sponsorship would be managed in light of the resignation of Marisa Francini as although this may not become apparent immediately it would over time.

It was confirmed the point of contact would need to be the Chair for the time being.

A suggestion was made that there be more interaction with the Henley Business Partnership, the Town Team and the Town Manager and after further discussion it was **RESOLVED**

**that the Chairman contact the Town Team and the Henley Partnership with regard to working more closely with Henley in Bloom, particularly with regard to sponsorship**

**49. VARIATION TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS**

In accordance with Standing Orders 5 (a) (vi), it was **RESOLVED**

**that as the Vice Chairman had to leave the meeting at 10.30am the order of business on the agenda be altered to allow item 12 – Thames and Chilterns in Bloom Seminar to be moved up the agenda and be considered next**

**50. THAMES AND CHILTERN IN BLOOM SEMINAR**

The Vice Chairman asked members to consider Henley hosting a Thames and Chilterns in Bloom regional seminar in February/March 2016, which is aimed at supporting entrants. Councillor Kellie Hinton and Gareth Bartle have offered to take the lead on organising the event.

Hosting the event would give an opportunity to showcase Henley to entrants from Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire and Visitor Information can be on display to promote the town.

Thames and Chilterns in Bloom would organise the majority of the event and pay for catering. Henley in Bloom's contribution would be to provide the rooms e.g. the Large Hall and the Committee Room on either 25 February or 3 March 2016 during the day (subject to availability).

Members supported the idea and felt it would have positive benefits and following further discussion **RESOLVED**

**that Henley host the Thames and Chilterns in Bloom regional seminar in the Town Hall (Large Hall and Committee Room ) to be held on a Thursday in February or March 2016**

**51. HENLEY IN BLOOM GARDENING AWARDS**

The Sub Committee considered next year's Henley in Bloom Gardening Awards – whereby residents of Henley are encouraged to enter their gardens, patios etc. for judging within certain categories, and prizes are presented at an awards ceremony held at the Town Hall in the autumn. Caroline Langer, who organises the competition asked whether one or two members could support her with organisation e.g. choosing categories, designing the leaflet, deciding on judging dates etc. The aim would be to have all the details organised before Christmas and the competition forms distributed in order to allow gardeners to buy their seeds and plan their displays with a view to the chosen themes.

After discussion it was **RESOLVED**

**that a Henley in Bloom Gardening Competition Working Group be established consisting of Caroline Langer, Councillor Kellie Hinton and Councillor David Eggleton in order to organise the Henley in Bloom Gardening Competition for 2016. The group to have delegated powers to decide the themes, and design the leaflet etc. should this be required due to timescales**

Members also considered the Pubs and Restaurants Awards and felt in future a leaflet should be distributed to all establishments with the relevant information listed e.g. judging criteria, judging and awards dates etc. asking for those who would like to enter to return the form. Members also felt back gardens should be judged as well as front gardens as, since the smoking ban, a lot of establishments had greatly improved their back gardens. It was suggested a small Working Group be established to refresh the Pubs and Restaurant Awards.

After discussion it was **RESOLVED**

**that a Henley in Bloom Pubs and Restaurants Competition Working Group be established consisting of Councillor Simon Smith, Councillor Kellie Hinton, Councillor Dave Eggleton and Caroline Langer to look at refreshing the competition for 2016 including asking establishments to enter and to include back in addition to front gardens**

Councillor Kellie Hinton left the meeting.

## **52. GARDENING BUDDIES UPDATE**

The Sub Committee received an update from Liz Hodgkin which outlined recent projects undertaken and future projects as follows:-

Jobs completed since September 2015

- Allium bulbs planted in the Gardening Buddy Bed
- All tubs planted, i.e. 5 at Wootton Manor, two at Gillotts corner, two at Northfield End.
- Two new tubs purchased and placed at Gillotts corner
- Bulbs planted at entrance to Newtown Estate. The bulbs were free so the opportunity was taken to improve this area. This will need some work in the spring.
- Two troughs at Three Horseshoes corner stripped out and re-planted for the spring.
- Lions Garden weeded, pruned and tidied up

Jobs to be completed before winter 2015

- Thanks was given to Henley in Bloom for the budget of £400. This money has paid for the new planters and autumn planting. The remaining will pay for the edging materials for Reading Road which will help the mowers in this area.
- Tidying up of both entrances and taking away the summer bedding.
- Tidying up the Rotary Beds, Twinning beds and Two Tree Island at Mill Meadows

The update also asked members to re-consider the future of the floral train and offered to help seek sponsorship, plant it up and to find ways to make the planting more cost effective.

The Sub Committee **RESOLVED**

**that the Gardening Buddies update be noted**

### **53. FLORAL TRAIN**

The Sub Committee considered future options for the floral train and during discussion the following comments were made:-

- the cost to plant up the train is over £1,000 – ways to reduce the cost of the planting could be investigated e.g. covering part of the train with metal sheeting (possibly in the First Great Western livery) to reduce the planting area
- repairs are required for the train e.g. 8 wheels – a quote for £1850 has been received
- First Great Western have offered to help sponsor the train and suggested relocating it in the Station Car Park e.g. nearer to the Train Station
- members noted the offer from Gardening Buddies to help with suggestions for the planting, the planting and to find sponsorship
- the Parks Manager advised that the train needs to be moved from the compound – Councillor Dave Eggleton offered to find an alternative temporary site in the interim

After further discussion it was **RESOLVED**

**that the Sub Committee agree in principal to the train being moved to the Station Car Park subject to finding sponsorship for planting, repairs and on-going maintenance e.g. watering**

**that Caroline Langler continue to liaise with Great Western Railways regarding sponsorship and re-locating the train**

### **54. NEWTOWN ROAD AND READING ROAD**

Caroline Langler suggested approaching businesses in the area to see if they would be interested in sponsorship. Members noted the best solution would be to have a large sign advertising the businesses on the estate which would reduce the ad-hoc signage, and for the area to be landscaped. Members noted to have a sign on the highway verge would require the area to be stopped up and suggested the Town Manager maybe able to help with this project.

The Sub Committee **RESOLVED**

**that the Town Manager be asked to assist with finding a solution to the ad hoc signage at the entrance to the Newtown Road/Reading Road entrance with a view to improving the visual amenity of the area.**

### **55. PROJECT TO REDUCE TOWN CENTRE AIR POLLUTION THROUGH PLANTING**

Members noted that permission is required from Oxfordshire County Council in order to position any planters on the highway, and noted that the silver birch trees are too big. Members considered alternatives e.g. smaller trees in smaller planters including other pollution reducing plants in the town centre planting. Members considered it possible for this to be included as part of the Town Council's Horticultural Contract which is soon to be considered by the Recreation and Amenities Committee.

Caroline Langler advised she had been in discussions with Reading University who are keen to be involved in the project to reduce air pollution in the town centre and had offered to help with monitoring.

After further discussion the Sub Committee **RESOLVED**

**that Caroline Langler continue to liaise with Reading University regarding utilising planting to reduce air pollution in the town centre**

**that the Recreation and Amenities Committee be asked to consider including pollution reducing planting in horticultural contract**

## **56. PROGRESS REPORT**

Members received and considered the progress report and made the following comments:-

*Greener Streets : Better Lives* – The Chairman advised that the project to replant the bed in the Kings Road car park (by the entrance nearest to the town centre) to provide a colourful bed with all year round interest had stalled as the District Council, although willing to give permission for the planting, had advised that their maintenance contract would not cover a mixed herbaceous bed. Also the horticulturalist who designed the planting scheme would no longer be working in the area. It was suggested that a possible solution would be for the Town Council to investigate purchasing the bed, however it was noted this may not be feasible. The Parks Manager reiterated improvements of areas such as this should have community support.

After further discussion the Sub Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

**that the Mayor make an informal approach to the South Oxfordshire District Council to see if they would, in principal, either sell or turn over the maintenance to the Town Council of the large bed on the left hand side as you enter the Kings Road Car Park from the entrance nearest the town centre**

*Fruit Tree – “Grow Your Own” initiative* – Councillor D Eggleton advised he would be distributing order forms during November/December to enable residents of the Gainsborough Estate to buy discounted fruit trees from Toad Hall Garden Centre. It was confirmed this offer was open to other residents of the town.

*Ancastle Green* – members noted a meeting is to be arranged with the Residents Association regarding improvements to the entrance, however noted the wall is north facing and is in the shade.

The Sub Committee **RESOLVED**

**that the progress report be noted**

The Mayor, Councillor Lorraine Hillier left the meeting.

## **57. CHRISTMAS DISPLAY COMPETITION**

The Chairman proposed Henley in Bloom organise a Christmas display competition in 2016 to encourage civic pride. Residents would be encouraged to have Christmas lighting displays in their front gardens.

Members supported the suggestion and the Chairman to report back to this Sub Committee with the criteria for the competition.

**58. CHRISTMAS TREE SHREDDING**

The Sub Committee noted that the Parks Department have offered, for the third year, to shred Christmas trees at a charge of £2 per tree (rather than a donation) to raise money for Henley in Bloom, at Mill Meadows on Saturday 2 and Saturday 9 January 2016 between 10 am and noon.

It was suggested the opportunity be taken to have a pop up Henley in Bloom and Civic Pride information stall at the tree shredding manned by members to promote the work of Henley in Bloom, inform re future projects e.g. the Gardening Competitions, Pubs and Restaurants, Christmas Display competition 2016 etc.

**59. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting date was set at **Tuesday 2 February 2016 at 9.30 am.**

bw

Chairman