

**Present:** The Chairman, Councillor Sam Evans  
Councillor H Chandler-Wilde  
Councillor Dave Eggleton  
Councillor Miss Kellie Hinton  
Councillor David Nimmo Smith  
Councillor Sarah Miller  
Chris Baker – Henley Hockey Club  
David Bancroft – River and Rowing Museum  
Sally Rankin – Henley Wildlife Group

**In Attendance:** Janet Wheeler – Town Clerk  
Gareth Bartle – Parks Service Manager  
Becky Walker – Minute Taker

**Also Present:** No members of the public  
1 member of the press

**50. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
None received.

**51. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
None.

**52. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**  
None.

**53. MINUTES**  
The Sub Committee received the minutes of the meeting of the Parks Sub Committee held on 22 April 2016.

Chris Baker confirmed he attended the meeting although he was not listed as being present.

The minutes, with the addition of Chris Baker in attendance, were received, approved and adopted and were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

**54. FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF THE WILDLIFE AREAS**  
The Committee received and considered a report from Sally Rankin – Chairman of the Henley Wildlife Group (HWG) and Gareth Bartle – Parks Manager regarding the future management and maintenance of Town Council's wildlife areas.

The report explained and Sally Rankin highlighted the following:-

- the HWG was formed in 1993 and over the last 23 years has created and managed, either under licence or latterly more informally, wildlife areas located on Town Council land including:-
  - the wildlife areas on Mill and Marsh Meadows (including the creation of the 3 ponds and the Wildlife Trail)
  - the Valley Road Chalk Bank
  - parts of Gillotts Field (Town Green)
  - Greys Road embankment
- the areas are successful in environmental terms having widened the range of flora and fauna (increased biodiversity) and are very popular with residents and visitors
- the areas have great educational value and potential - Mill/Marsh Meadows are regularly used as an outdoor classroom for the River and Rowing Museum's Education Department
- the HWG organises work parties once a month at Mill/Marsh Meadows and other occasional work days for specific tasks. The HWG relies on voluntary support and numbers of volunteers have reduced over the years with the age of volunteers increasing. The Park Service have increased their role in the management and maintenance of the areas over the past few years. The Parks Service have the advantage of having staff with conservation experience plus the skills and training to use larger machinery eg strimming, chainsaws, larger mowers etc
- Sally Rankin is finding the workload increasingly difficult – both the physical work on the ground and also the administration. In light of the above, Mrs Rankin and the Parks Manager have discussed ways to reduce the workload of the HWG and to “future proof” the care of the areas.
- It is suggested the conservation role, currently undertaken by Park Warden Chris Baldwin on an informal ad hoc basis, is formalised and the role of “Conservation Officer” for the Town Council's wildlife areas is created. It is envisaged this role would absorb 3 days a week (all year round).
- the formalisation of this role within the Parks Service would ensure the continued care of the areas and could be widened to encompass an increased educational element to involve local schools and groups.
- the role would continue to be supported by the HWG with their more specialised knowledge in particularly areas eg wildflowers, bird habitats etc

Sally Rankin asked if the Town Council would invest more staff time on all of its open spaces in order to encourage biodiversity. Park Warden Chris Baldwin is very knowledgeable and with the expertise of Sally Rankin the wildlife value of sites such as the Chalk Bank, Gillotts Field, the Fairmile Cemetery could be vastly improved. An example would be to have a 10 m strip around the edge of the new Cemetery where the grass is left unmown to encourage wild flowers, whilst maintaining close mown grass in sections with graves.

The **Parks Manager** re-iterated that the areas the Wildlife Group have looked after for 23 years are owned by the Town Council and suggested it may be time the Town Council to take back their management with the co-operation and support of the HWG. Regarding enhancing other wildlife areas – the Parks Manager informed members that many of the tasks raised above are already undertaken by the Parks Service on an ad hoc basis eg staggering the grass cutting at the Cemetery to allow the primroses to seed, also Gillotts Field and Greys Road embankment.

Members discussed the proposal and the following comments were made:-

- by formalising the role it will ensure the conservation work would continue should Chris Baldwin choose to leave. Also this role could co-ordinate and work with and various groups to maximise volunteer time eg HWG, Henley in Transition, Henley in Bloom, Gardening Buddies etc
- a vote of thanks to Sally Rankin and the HWG for all their work over the past 23 years. This is an opportunity for the Town Council to assess the situation and consider its future management however the financial implications also need to be considered
- the Town Clerk is currently reviewing the Town Council's staff structure and this element can be included in this process
- an educational aspect should be included in any review to increase knowledge of the local flora and fauna either with information on the website, working with schools, providing tours

A discussion ensued and members were in favour of, not only creating a conservation role within the Parks Service, but also taking a more proactive role in enhancing wildlife within existing designated wildlife in addition to creating new areas on the Town Council's open spaces and areas within their care.

The Sub Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

**that the Parks Sub Committee support the principal of creating a Conservation Officer role within the Parks Service in order to maintain, expand and/or preserve the Town Council's and the town's wildlife areas**

**AND**

**that the Parks Sub Committee recommend that the relevant Committee/Officers of the Town Council investigate further and, if appropriate, the financial implications be considered re the 2017/18 budgets**

## **55. HENLEY WILDLIFE AREA**

Sally Rankin gave a brief verbal update re the Henley Wildlife Group and confirmed that Markit Economics, a Henley based company, are undertaking a corporate volunteer day on Wednesday 3 August 2016 at Mill/Marsh Meadows. Sally Rankin also confirmed that she has spoke to local media and hoped to use this work day to promote such workdays and encourage new volunteers.

## **56. SIGNAGE AT MILL AND MARSH MEADOWS**

The Committee received an update regarding the signage project at Mill Meadows which had previously been presented to and approved by the Recreation and Amenities Committee.

Members discussed the update as follows

- details of creating an **Information Wall** on the Leichlingen Pavilion at Mill Meadows was welcomed. The wall to incorporate a map of the Meadows, a location map showing the proximity to the town centre and other relevant information including website, address, ownership etc. The wall to be rendered and painted. A “mock-up” illustration was shown to members.
- it was suggested the location map in context with the town centre be larger on the Information Wall
- removal of the large **car park sign** and the information to be transferred to smaller signs by each car parking machine including charges, ECN rules and dos and don'ts within the car park
- simplify the **playground signage** and include icons rather than words where possible. The signs to include no scooters, no dogs, no glass/litter, say no to strangers, no smoking, no ball games and small children should be supervised, no graffiti/vandalism
- **mooring signage** along the tow path. Members noted the back of the signs could be utilised as they face the Meadows
- relevant information should be in **braille**
- it was acknowledged too much information can be counter productive
- the **materials the signs** will be made of should be of a good standard and should be easy to clean and not prone to fading in a short space of time, the ability to neatly and easily change details eg car parking charges to be included
- signs informing moorers that they should use the recycling points (and their locations) for their rubbish rather than the litter bins be included. It was noted a review of bins/litter should be an item on the next Parks Sub Committee agenda
- members considered the signage for the putting green and the possibility of re-naming the area to reflect its varying usage. After discussion the Thames Lawn was suggested – this could be used in marketing eg Putting @ The Thames Lawn, Twelfth Night @ The Thames Lawn

The Chairman advised the next step would be to approve the final designs and to investigate the types and quality of material to be used and to obtain quotes from manufacturers. In order to keep this project moving the Chairman suggested approval of the designs be delegated to the Chairman of the Recreation and Amenities Committee/Parks Sub Committee, the Town Clerk and the Parks Manager.

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

**that the signage as presented be approved and progressed and the comments above to be forwarded to the designers for their inclusion**

**that in order to progress this project in a timely fashion the approval of the designs be delegated to the Chairman of the Recreation and Amenities Committee/Parks Sub Committee, the Town Clerk and the Parks Manager (members to be kept updated)**

**that the putting green area be re-named the Thames Lawn.**

## **57. AN INFORMATION BOARD FOR THE OBELISK**

Members received and considered a design, and the funding for, an information board providing the history of the Grade II Listed obelisk which is located at Mill Meadows.

The Chairman praised the design of the board however questioned the significance of the red kites. A member responded that the red kites are included on the previous 2 boards (Humphrey Gainsborough and the Makins family) and they provide continuity which links this series of boards.

A member highlighted the community aspect of these boards which have been paid for by a number of groups including the Henley Archaeological and Historical Society and Henley in Bloom and suggested that these groups be asked if they would like to contribute.

The Sub Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

**that the proposed design for information board for the Obelisk be approved**

**that Henley Town Council fund the cost of the design and manufacture of the plaque (approx. £1200) and that Henley Archaeological and Historical Society and Henley in Bloom be asked if they would like to contribute to the cost**

## **58. PROVISION OF AMENITIES AT FREEMANS MEADOW AND MAKINS RECREATION GROUND**

### **MAKINS RECREATION GROUND**

Members received, considered and noted the following:-

- the notes of the Parks Working Group site meeting held at Makins Recreation Ground on 8 June 2016 which met to look at the proposed extension to the playground. These notes included an extensive report by David Bancroft outlining a number of areas for consideration including green aspects and the wide variety of types of equipment which could be incorporated. Thanks were extended to David Bancroft for this research.
- a report (including a questionnaire) written by Councillor Miss Kellie Hinton following consultation with families and children at the Gainsborough Residents Association Tea Party on Saturday 11 June 2016 regarding proposed play equipment. Members thanked Cllr Miss Hinton for her hard work.

Members discussed the reports and the Chairman recommended that this information be forwarded to Dr Carolyn Jenkins and she be asked to research and provide quotes for the projects identified for year/phase 1 at Makins Recreation Ground (as listed in the minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2016)

It was suggested a site visit be arranged to two parks in Reading where the suggested material for the path (breedon gravel) is used – this will allow members to see the paths in a park setting and will help members to visualise how this material would look at Makins.

Members discussed outdoor gym equipment and considered having one set at Freemans and one set at Makins. It was agreed a report should be presented to the Recreation and Amenities Committee regarding the types of outdoor gym equipment, whether they are grouped or spread out and their locations.

After discussion the Sub Committee **RECOMMENDED**

**that Dr Carolyn Jenkins be asked to provide quotes for phase 1 of the improvements at Makins Recreation Ground (as agreed at the Parks Sub Committee on 22.4.16) as follows:-**

- **expand the playground area to its final size and fence**
- **provide additional play equipment for toddler/inclusive play**
- **re-align the football pitch and provide goals**
- **seek quotes for all the pathway and the top section only (1.5 m wide) to enable a decision on whether to phase the path or build all in one go**
- **provide new seating and bins**
- **research tree planting options in liaison with the Henley Skatepark Initiative**

**that a report be submitted to the Recreation and Amenities Committee on the types and location of outdoor gym equipment**

#### **FREEMANS MEADOW**

The Committee received and noted a suggestion re from Mr Lawson-Smith of Pearces Orchard to re-align the goal posts from an east/west position to a north/south position to prevent frequent incidents of footballs being kicked over the wall into the gardens in Pearces Orchard – this to be forwarded to Dr Carolyn Jenkins.

The Chairman advised a report would be brought to the next meeting regarding improvements to Freemans Meadow.

#### **59. PROVISION OF SHADE IN THE TODDLER PLAYGROUND AT MILL MEADOW**

Members received an update regarding the provision of shade at Mill Meadows which has been researched by Dr Carolyn Jenkins as follows:-

There are 2 options:-

- using **sail cloth** on a large post. This will provide shade over a large area of the playground however there could be issues re noise re the sail flapping in the wind. Also professional advice would need to be sought from an engineer/architect regarding the structure. Sail cloth would not offer UVA/UVB protection
- using **shade cloth** on a structure/posts which could be installed along the fence line and/or hedge line in the toddler playground to avoid puncturing the wetpour surface. This material would provide UVA/UVB protection but would not provide as large an area of shade. The possibility of including seating would also be investigated.

The Town Clerk advised subsidence issues should be investigated if any hedging is to be removed.

After discussion members favoured the shade cloth option.

The Sub Committee **RESOLVED**

**that Dr Carolyn Jenkins be asked to investigate the shade cloth option further and to provide plans/quotes**

## **60. MOORING AND CAR PARKING – MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

Member received, considered and noted the management accounts for Mill Meadows up to June 2016.

The Parks Manager confirmed that when there is double or treble moorings the Park Wardens seek fees from all boats.

## **61. USE OF THE PARKS**

The Sub Committee received and noted the calendar of events on Mill and Marsh Meadows, Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground.

Prior to considering a request from the British Heart Foundation to use Mill Meadows as a check point for the London to Oxford Trek in May 2017, which is a repeat event, the Chairman suggested delegated powers be extended to the Town Clerk for repeat events, when the event has gone well and there have been no issues, in liaison with the Parks Manager.

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

**that the Town Clerk, in liaison with the Parks Manager, be given delegated powers to give permission for repeat events which have worked well in the past**

## **62. RIVER AND ROWING MUSEUM**

The Sub Committee received a verbal update from David Bancroft re the River and Rowing Museum as follows:-

- the Museum is very excited to be included on the short list for the national Kids and Museums Award. This event is judged by mystery shopper between August and early October. There are very explicit judging criteria re what they want to see in order to encourage families to Mill Meadows
- the RRM was involved in the successful Swan Upping event recently by providing lunch
- work is continuing towards the new Piper Gallery which it is hoped to open in December – it is a re-working of the Treasures Room and will involve borrowing from private collectors and would have a rotating collection. This project was successfully funded via crowd funding in order to provide the capital needed to create the gallery.
- work to mend the roof continues
- investigation is being undertaken into resurfacing the RRM car park and improve demarcation of spaces to make better operational use the area

The Chairman thanked David Bancroft for his update.

## **63. PROGRESS REPORT**

Members received, considered and noted the progress report.

*Vertical Banner Poles* - The banner poles are in situ and are flying Henley Town Council "Welcome to Henley" banners.

*Canoe Hire* – the Chairman circulated very complimentary views from Trip Advisor regarding the new Canoe Hire at Mill Meadows and asked that the Town Council's thanks be recorded.

*Green Flag* - the Parks Manager advised that Mill and Marsh Meadows had been awarded the Green Flag for 2016/17 following judging in May by 2 Green Flag judges.

The Chairman thanked the Parks Manager and his team for achieving this award and acknowledged the extensive judging criteria which had to be met. Thanks was also extended to all those who assisted on the judging day including the River and Rowing Museum and the Henley Bowls Club.

**64. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Friday 14 October 2016 at 9.30 am.

bw

Chairman