

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: Mrs J Wheeler – Town Clerk
Mr G Bartle – Parks Service Manager
Mrs B Walker – Minute Taker

Also Present: 6 members of the public
1 member of the press

37. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received. Councillor S Miller advised she needs to leave at 10.55 am.

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

39. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

Mrs Mary Smith – 54 Luker Avenue and Mr Ernest Buckett of 16 Luker Avenue – Minute 41 – Provision of Amenities at Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground - Mrs Smith and Mr Buckett felt the playground area should be fenced off to prevent dogs entering the playground. Also there are problems with dog mess and litter.

Mr Tony May – 11 Leicester Close - Minute 41 - Provision of Amenities at Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground - Mr May asked whether letters would be sent to the houses of those living adjacent to Freemans Meadow as part of the consultation process re forming an informal group of residents who share a common interest in Freemans Meadow and who may like to be involved in the improvements/projects and other activities eg the proposed children's Park Run. Mr May also asked whether residents' feedback would be taken into consideration when making any decisions re Freemans Meadow. Mr May also asked if there were any restrictions on the use of Freemans Meadow eg covenants or conditions re the lottery funding re the installation of the playground.

The Chairman confirmed consultation would take place and feedback would be taken into consideration. She also confirmed permission had been given in principal to holding a children's Park Run at Freemans subject to risk assessments etc. The Town Clerk confirmed there were no restrictions registered with the land registry re Freemans Meadow.

Mr Peter Lloyd – 10 Leicester Close - Minute 41 - Provision of Amenities at Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground - Mr May reiterated the comments he made at the last Parks Sub Committee meeting that Freemans Meadow is a wonderful open area, a green oasis in a very busy area. He felt the area would not benefit from too much development and would be enhanced by improved planting, improvements to the playground and fencing and installation of a path in what can be a quite a wet area.

Mr John Carroll – 8 Leicester Close - Minute 41 - Provision of Amenities at Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground – Mr Carroll said how he loved the Meadows and often walked his 2 dogs there. He hoped the Town Council would preserve the character of this quiet oasis. He felt the area could be enhanced with additional seating, particularly for pensioners and was against tennis courts which he felt would generate continuous noise.

Mr Ian Tiffin – 59 Northfield End - Minute 41 - Provision of Amenities at Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground – Mr Tiffin highlighted the problem re dog mess and felt provision of more dog bins would help solve the problem. Mr Tiffin also highlighted that the roundabout gets jammed due to the unsuitable surface of playbark. He also suggested exercise classes were a good use of the space and should be encouraged.

40. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Parks Sub Committee held on 29 January 2016 were received, approved and adopted and were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

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

The Chairman welcomed Dr Carolyn Jenkins, Landscape Design Officer, Reading Borough Council, who has been appointed by the Town Council to progress the plans re improvements to and investment in Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground. The Chairman advised that the Parks Sub Committee had received and considered Dr Jenkin's preliminary report at its meeting on 29 January 2016 and Dr Jenkins was going to present to this meeting further details in order for members to consider which aspects they would like to progress and which aspects should be prioritised along with the associated budgets and timescales.

Dr Jenkins thanked the Committee for giving her and her team the opportunity to work on this project and how delighted they are to be involved. Dr Jenkins re-iterated that Henley Town Council is the client and she would respond to their direction, instructions and comments and would offer options for the Town Council to consider.

Dr Jenkins presented a power point presentation outlining a number of options/proposals for the Committee's consideration and made the following comments:-

Makins Recreation Ground

- all ages to be catered for and something for everyone - from toddler play, skatepark – teens (plus younger and older), table tennis, mini ground-level trampolines, seating, planting
- the feedback from the consultation undertaken by the Town Council has been listened to and built-in to the proposals. Dr Jenkins referred to Mrs Paula

Isaacs detailed suggestions for the park which were very helpful and members extended thanks to Mrs Isaacs.

The consultation revealed the following:-

- **main "likes":-**
 - the views across the town – some of the best in Henley. The area identified as having the best views in the park are marked with a line on the map (below the playground).
It is proposed – in order to maximise the views it proposed to place seating along this line affording views over the town.
- **main "dislikes"** – dog mess
Additional dog bins could be installed eg along the proposed path.
- **main "wants" :-**
 - **to expand the play area to include equipment for toddlers and for disabled children**
It is proposed:-
 - to expand the area of the playground - fenced in with different coloured gates - yellow is the British Standard. The fence is proposed as to be galvanised bird top fencing (eg hooped at the top) although cheaper options are available
 - to install pieces of equipment to cater for a wider age range including toddlers – the equipment to be themed – transport was suggested however many themes can be considered
 - to provide inclusive play equipment which are fun to be used by disabled and able bodied children alike and which encourages social play. Also to include equipment which allows parents to use along with their children eg ropeswing
 - safety surfacing is suggested as tigermulch which is made of recycled vehicle tyres
 - **outdoor gym equipment**
It is proposed – to position gym equipment at "stations" around the park following the proposed path
 - **more seating**
It is proposed – to have more seating along the "view line" re above, in the expanded play area and around the park. Also seating is included in the skateparks plans.
 - **table tennis**
it is proposed - to install table tennis table in the bottom area of Makins. Also to include trampolines which are built into the ground which are very popular with children up to grandparents.
 - **more planting** – additional planting to soften the area
- **football pitch** – realign the football pitch to create an informal 5-aside football pitch with new goal posts
- **a pathway** – during initial discussions a pathway around the park was suggested along with one between the middle steps from Greys Road to the Footpath to Haywards Close and from the Gainsborough Estate to the play area.

A path would enable:-

- improved access for wheelchairs and prams
- dog walkers could keep their feet dry on rainy days (dog bins could be positioned along the path)
- younger children could use the path for playing with their scooters
- jogging track and could have outdoor gym equipment placed along the path

If a path is decided upon *it is proposed* – to install a 1.5 m wide path to be made of brendon gravel with a timber edging– a self-binding gravel which has a natural look and is used at many National Trust properties. This surface is permeable, easier to repair than concrete and can be mown across. Small channels may need to be imbedded to accommodate water flow.

- **fencing at top of slope** – as the knotweed is eradicated the need for a barrier increases. A number of options could be considered including chestnut paling in the short term, green bow-top railings (approx. 1 m tall), laying a hedge in the long term (once the effects of the herbicide wears off). It was agreed the fencing should be considered along with the fencing between the park and the car park and in conjunction with the skate park development.
- **planting** – there are many options to enhance the planting including shrubs, bulbs, wildflowers, hedging, woodland edge etc

Timetable

As the enhancements are to be carried out over a 3 year period the investments will need to be prioritised and phased according to budgets. The following suggestions were made as a broad outline and a starting point for discussions as many aspects are still to be considered by the Council. Three quotes will be sought for each aspect where possible. 10% contingency should be added.

Phase/Year 1 (approx. costs in brackets)

- in the first year it would be ideal to invest in items the users most want eg the toddler/inclusive play equipment (£22,000)
- expand the play area to its final size and fence - in the meantime the area would provide a grassed, dog free area with seating (fencing - £11,700)
- provide something for other age groups eg re-align the football pitch and provide goals (£1,000)
- install southern circle (top area by the playground) of new pathway (approx. £9500 for a 1.2 m wide pathway – may need to increase to 1.5 m)
- provide new seating and bins (£10,000 approx depending on style, number)
- start tree planting

TOTAL - £54,200 plus a contingency of £5,400

Phase/Year 2

- add to the play equipment (£6,500)
- install outdoor gym equipment with interpretation boards– type, location to be decided (£15,000)
- complete pathway
- table tennis tables

- planting (trees, bulbs and plants)

Phase/Year 3

- fencing (approx. £10,000 – depending on style)
- additional play equipment (£15,000)
- ground level trampolines
- planting (trees, bulbs, shrubs)
- install additional pathway

Members considered the options and made the following comments:-

- discussion took place regarding whether a pathway was required and the advantages and disadvantages were considered
- paths should be provided – many people cut across Makins eg going to school, walking to town
- a member preferred for the toddler play area not be based on transport
- a member enquired the life-expectancy of equipment – Dr Jenkins advised depending on the equipment/manufacture it was usually 15 years and added interest usually wanes before the equipment needs replacing
- a shaded area would be beneficial as Makins does not have natural shade
- shaded/sunny seating and picnic areas should be provided
- wildlife value of woodland edge should be maximised to increase biodiversity, natural wild flowers,

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

that the following improvements to Makins Recreation Ground be supported:-

- **extending and fencing (green bow top) the playground area (year 1)**
- **providing more equipment for toddler and inclusive play (year 1)**
- **pathway (1.5 m) around and across the park (the top part – year 1)**
- **outdoor gym equipment (clustered or along the path to be decided)**
- **re-aligned football pitch and goals (year 1)**
- **additional seating (year 1)**
- **planting – in consultation with Henley in Bloom, Gainsborough Residents Association, Henley Wildlife Group and Parks Service**

that the Finance Strategy and Management Committee be asked to consider approving a budget for this project subject to Full Council approval and funding opportunities be explored

Freemans Meadow

Consultation was undertaken at Freemans and the following comments were made:-

- **main “like”** - tranquillity
- **main “dislike”** - dog fouling
- **main “wants”** – toddler play, outdoor gym equipment and more seating

There are fewer suggestions for Freemans Meadow at this stage. The park attracts fewer people and this is thought to be due to lack of parking and not having a visible front entrance.

Should the Council wish to attract more people investigation could be made into providing parking, providing facilities which would attract visitors eg tennis courts, croquet, bowls and making the entrance more visible.

Alternatively smaller additions could be made to the park enhancing what already exists and retaining a sense of tranquility eg:-

- additional toddler and inclusive play equipment and fencing around the play area, safety surface to be reviewed
- additional seating/ picnic area
- outdoor gym/personal training stations
- planting (shrubs and bulbs)
- improvements to the entrance/signage
- a circular path
- tree planting to replace trees which have been removed and possibly to create an avenue of trees which creates a popular focus and creates a sense of place.
- enhanced planting eg wildflower, shrubs, bulbs

Members discussed possible improvements to Freemans and made the following comments:-

- **Parking** – would be difficult to monitor and could be taken up by residents parking rather than those visiting the park, it would mean the loss of green space.

Councillor Nimmo Smith advised the County Council had indicated they would not have any fundamental objections to a vehicular entrance from Freemans.

- **Tennis Courts** – it was acknowledged there was opposition from local residents re the provision of tennis courts mainly due to noise
- **enhanced planting** – a member suggested Henley in Bloom would very much like to be involved in this aspect of development
- improve the **entrance and signage** (being discussed as part of new branding programme)
- additional **seating, picnic areas and bins**
- encourage use by **personal trainers, fitness programmes** etc
- concrete near the play area to be removed
- the **youth shelter** be removed

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

that the overall tranquil nature of Freemans Meadow be retained

that the area be enhanced with:-

- additional planting with the input of Henley in Bloom eg planting of trees (avenue), shrubs, wildflowers to be investigated
- additional toddler and inclusive play equipment and fencing and safety surface to be investigated around the play area
- improved entrance and signage
- installation of a pathway
- additional seating, picnic area and bins
- no parking to be provided
- no tennis courts to be provided

that Dr Carolyn Jenkins be asked to provide more information/ costings regarding the above enhancements

The Chairman thanked Dr Jenkins for her hard work and presentation re the proposed improvements.

Councillor S Miller left the meeting at 10.50 am.

42. PROVISION OF SHADE IN THE TODDLER PLAYGROUND AT MILL MEADOWS

The Sub Committee received and considered a suggestion from Dr Carolyn Jenkins regarding the provision of shade at Mill Meadows utilising sail cloth. Dr Jenkins explained that the options for installing a shelter were limited due to the continuous safety surface as supports could not be placed in it.

Structures could however be placed in the areas with hedging which could support a sail structure – this would be in-keeping with the riverside park.

Further investigation needs to be made into the stability and practical side of this proposal and Dr Jenkins asked members for their comments.

Members agreed this was a novel and interesting proposal and after further discussion **RESOLVED**

that Dr Jenkins be asked to carry out further investigation into providing a shaded area at the toddler playground at Mill Meadows made up of supports and sail cloth

43. SIGNAGE AT MILL AND MARSH MEADOWS

- i. Members noted an update from David Bancroft re the new signage Henley Festival and River and Rowing Museum (RRM) signage as follows:-

“Directional Signs to the Museum along Mill Meadows

During March, alterations were made to the sign structures along Mill Meadows to incorporate additional signboards for the Henley Festival. This addition had been done following consultation with the previous Town Clerk and had been subject to his agreement.

About two weeks after the Henley Festival signs were fitted, the River and Rowing Museum applied new vinyl graphics to the existing panels giving directions to the museum. These now all follow a consistent colour scheme of a navy ground with orange lettering and museum logo.

After this work had been completed we were made aware of a matter raised via the Bowls Club that the new Henley Festival panel on the sign nearest to the Bowls Club was causing a concern for cars pulling out onto the Mill Meadows exit road where there is now reduced visibility. The Museum has agreed to undertake to either remove – or possibly adjust – the position of the panel so that the visibility for motorists is restored.

We have been pleased by the impact of the new signage, which had not been renewed for some time, and with the customer response, especially from regular visitors to the museum.”

Members were surprised that there had been no consultation via this Sub Committee re the new RRM signage particularly as signage is currently being reviewed.

Members noted the RRM/Festival sign near the large car parking sign was impeding the vision splay for Bowls Club members exiting their car parking area and needed to be removed on health and safety grounds as a matter of urgency.

Members agreed that the green and white signage looked out of place following the application of the new blue and orange RRM signage and now needed to be updated and should be included in the Town Council’s signage review and hoped the RRM would be agreeable to this.

After further discussion it was **RESOLVED**

that the Henley Town Council sections of the green and white signage at Mill/Marsh Meadows should be updated and be included in the signage review in order to harmonise the signs and discussions should take place with the River Rowing Museum regarding this matter

- ii. The Committee received and considered a report regarding the proposed new signage at Mill Meadows (including illustrations of sample signs) which was considered and approved by Full Council on 29 March 2016.

The Committee noted the new signage system:-

- is based on a system that includes internationally recognised symbols for maximum recognition
- the colour palette will be as follows:-
 - grey base colour
 - different colours for different uses eg blue for transportation (moorings, car parks etc), green for parks, yellow for facilities (eg visitor information) and orange for town locations
- is cost-effective unit production system that allows partial replacement, updates etc
- is flexible for different spaces whilst remaining consistent in design

- the signage will create a brand identity

The new signage will be used across the Town Council's properties and will be phased in over 3 years – Mill/Marsh Meadows will be the first phase.

The Committee **RESOLVED**

to approve the design of the new signage system and to progress with the design, type and locations of the new signs at Mill/Marsh Meadows and to seek costings for their production and installations

44. HENLEY WILDLIFE GROUP

Mrs Sally Rankin of the Henley Wildlife Group gave an update as follows:-

- the work parties continue on the first Wednesday of every month – volunteers are always welcome and free tea and cake is provided. It was suggested Councillors be advised as they may like to attend
- Park Warden, Chris Baldwin prepares and attends the work parties and is a great help. Mrs Rankin thanked the Parks Manager for facilitating this arrangement and the Town Council for its continued support
- a corporate volunteer work day at Mill/Marsh Meadows is arranged for Wednesday 3 August 2016 with Markit Economics

The Committee **RESOLVED**

that Councillors be advised of the Henley Wildlife Group's work days on the first Wednesday of every month between 9.30 am – 12.30 pm at Mill/Marsh Meadows as they may like to volunteer (tea and cake is provided)

45. MOORING AND CAR PARKING – MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

The Committee received the management accounts for Mill Meadows up to 31 March 2016 and noted the income is improving each year and it was suggested this is as a result of improved facilities. Members suggested the visitor information centre could be enhanced.

The Committee **RESOLVED**

that the management accounts for Mill Meadows up to 31 March 2016 be noted

46. THE PROVISION OF DOG BAGS/GLOVES

The Committee received and considered a report regarding the provision of dog bag/gloves at Mill Meadows following a query at the Finance Strategy and Management Committee.

Members noted the following from the report:-

- dog bags are provided to encourage owners to clear up after their dogs
- they are provided from a dispenser which is designed to allow only one bag per pull
- the Parks Manager has seen no evidence of bags being wasted
- the cost per year is approx £430 per year

Members agreed any steps to encourage responsible dog ownership should be continued and suggested dog bags also be provided (near the dog bins) at Makins Recreation Ground, Freemans Meadow and Gillotts Field.

The Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the Town Council continue to provide dog bags at Mill Meadows and also provide dispensers at Freemans Meadow, Makins Recreation Ground and Gillotts Field (subject to budget)

47. USE OF THE PARKS

- i The Committee received the calendar of events on Mill and Marsh Meadows, Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground and a draft of the new leaflet promoting events and band performances on the Meadows in 2016 detailing.

The Committee **RESOLVED**

that the calendar of events for Mill/Marsh Meadows, Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground be noted

- ii. The Committee noted the Henley Round Table have asked for permission to use the Mill Meadows for the May Fair on Monday 2 May 2016 as in previous years and as the request was delayed, and to allow the preparations to continue, the Town Clerk gave permission under delegated powers.

48. PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee receive the progress report and made the following comment:-
Henley Canoe Hire – the cabin is installed and looks in-keeping. The opening weekend is this weekend (23/24 April) and the Chairman urged members to attend
Vertical Banner Poles at Mill Meadows – the Finance Strategy and Management Committee did not agree the funding and the Accountant is now looking into alternative options which is hoped will be discussed at Full Council.

Members felt any income from the banner poles should come back to the Recreation and Amenities budget.

Park Run UK - the Committee noted further investigation is being undertaken including risk assessments.

The Committee **RESOLVED**

that the progress report be noted

49. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Friday 29 July 2016 at 9.30 am.

Chairman

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