

**Present:** The Chairman, Councillor Miss S Evans  
The Vice Chairman, Councillor D Nimmo Smith  
Councillor D Eggleton  
Councillor Miss K Hinton  
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:** 1 member of the public  
1 member of the press

#### **14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Miss S Miller, Mr C Baker, Mrs Sally Rankin and the Town Clerk.

#### **15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

#### **16. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION**

*Ms Catherine Notaras – Pantiles, Elizabeth Road - Agenda Item 11 i – Provision of Amenities at Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground and Agenda Item 12 – Fencing at Makins Recreation Ground - Ms Notaras spoke in favour of increasing planting at Makins Recreation Ground, particularly at the Gainsborough Estate end, partly to increase the visual amenity and soften the fencing and partly to increase biodiversity and suggested “cloud hedging”. Ms Notaras explained she has been involved in the project to encourage use of local footpaths in and around town and has incorporated Makins in one of her walks and although the recreation ground offered fantastic views the area was quite bleak. She was therefore interested to see consideration was being given to the appointment of a Landscape Architect and would be keen to get involved in any consultation process.*

Ms Notaras also spoke against the erection of a large wire fence at Makins and felt a better alternative would be an edible plant mix hedge and smaller wooden fence (if required). This not only would be more aesthetically pleasing but also would benefit wildlife.

A member responded and agreed it was a good idea to promote the parks and suggested an article be placed in the spring issue of the Henley magazine. The possibility of having an interpretation board providing the history of Makins Recreation Ground and how it came to be donated to the people of Henley was raised. The provision of a structure providing shade at Makins was also suggested as there is no natural shade.

**17. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Parks Sub Committee held on 31 July 2015 were received, approved and adopted and were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

**18. MEMBERSHIP OF THE SUB COMMITTEE**

Members noted that at the Recreation and Amenities Committee on 9 September 2015 the Terms of Reference of this Sub Committee were amended to permit up to 6 Councillors to be members. Councillor D Eggleton will serve on the Sub Committee as a Town Councillor and will also represent the Gainsborough Residents Association.

**19. MOORINGS AND CAR PARKING – MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

The Sub Committee received and considered the management accounts for Mill Meadows to 31 August 2015 and remarked how healthy the mooring and car parking income was for August

The Committee **RESOLVED**

**that the management accounts to date 2015 be noted.**

**20. SIGNAGE**

i. Members received and noted the update from Mr D Bancroft as follows:-

*“Vinyl overlays on existing signage close to the Museum building so that we are now displaying accurate opening hours information. We are aware of the fading of the Mill Meadows sequence of signs leading towards the museum car park and will be getting these quoted for refreshing with further vinyl overlays. However, we don’t have funding available to replace these fully at present, but would consider doing so at any point in the future where our ticketing policy changed, necessitating new text for the signs. We shall be keen to learn of the outcome of any council plans for signage ‘harmonisation’ so that this can offer appropriate influence to future museum signage.”*

Mr Bancroft amplified his comments above and re-iterated that the key aspect for the Museum was visitor information on the approach to the Museum and they were keen to work with the Town Council to improve the signage however their limitation was funding. The Chairman agreed the Town Council and the River and Rowing Museum should liaise on the signage project.

ii. Members received and noted an audit of the current signage at Mill and Marsh Meadows. Members discussed the signage and made the following comments:-

- the current signage is inconsistent
- a lot of the signage needs replacing and updating
- a phased approach to the replacement should be devised in order to spread the cost
- signs should be grouped into different types and prioritised eg, access, car parking, mooring, welcome board and visitor information, Bowling Club etc
- new signage at Mill and Marsh Meadows and in the town needs to interlink

- the signage at Mill/Marsh Meadows should be welcoming and inform visitors of the facilities on offer at the Meadows, upcoming events, advise on what is and is not permitted and be attractive
- the Welcome Board should have a map of the Meadows and a orientation map showing its location in relation to the town
- the Meadows should not be over cluttered with signs
- some signage has an established format and should not be changed eg parking for the disabled
- the signage also needs to inform visitors to the Meadows of the close proximity of the town centre, shops, cafes etc
- the Town Team is also investigating signage in the town centre and directional finger posts around the town.

Members acknowledged the signage would benefit from being designed by a professional and received a quote from the designer of the new town branding for a Welcome Board (including map), general signage at the Meadows with infographics. It was noted elements of the Welcome sign eg the map could be used on a leaflet for visitors.

Members agreed the re-signing of the town and the Meadows was a complex issue and there must be liaison with the Town Team and interested parties.

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

**that in order to progress the re-signing of Mill and Marsh Meadows, Freemans Meadows and Makins Recreation Ground the Recreation and Amenities Committee be asked to consider allocating up to £2000 from the Recreation Improvements Budget to fund the cost of the design of a Welcome Board (£600), general signage (£440) and infographics (£40 each) for Mill Meadows and name boards for Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground**

**that liaison take place with stakeholders at Mill and Marsh Meadows eg the River and Rowing Museum, the Henley Bowling Club, the Mill Meadows Nursery, the Piazza Café with regard to updating the signage at Mill and Marsh Meadows**

**that liaison take place with the Town Centre Manager and Town Team to ensure there is integration between the town centre signage (which is currently being reviewed) and the updated signage at Mill/Marsh Meadows, Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground to encourage visitors to the parks to visit the town and vice versa**

- iii. Members received and noted an audit of current signage at Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground and acknowledged the need for these to be included in the signage review as recommended above. However more detailed signage eg Welcome Boards would need to wait till the review and decisions re future provision of facilities had been decided upon.

## 21. TODDLER PLAYGROUND AT MILL MEADOWS

The Chairman advised that at the meeting of the Full Council on 4 August 2015 a member of the public requested that the Town Council consider installing additional cradle swings in the Toddler Playground as there was often a queue to use these (currently there are 4 flat swings and 2 cradle swings). The Chairman also advised that a Councillor had ordered 2 additional cradle swings (free of charge) and members were concerned that due consideration had not been given to this matter by Committee prior to one Councillor ordering the swings.

A member commented that there is also queues for the flat swings and it was noted this was testament to how popular the playground is.

Members considered whether an additional swing unit could be installed but after discussion felt that to do this could make the playground more cluttered and restrict the area where children can run around.

A suggestion was made that the 2 cradle swings which are currently on the set of 4 swings be swapped with the 2 flat swings which are on the set of 2 swings as the latter is in the area which focusses more on equipment for the younger age group.

A member also commented that there is type of swing available for 4 month to 1 ½ year olds (which resembles a car seat) and consideration should be given to incorporating one of these in any future playground improvements.

After further discussion it was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

**that the number of cradle swings is not increased in the Toddler Playground at Mill Meadows and it remain as 4 flat and 2 cradle swings**

**that the 2 cradle swings be moved to the swing set containing 2 swings and the 4 flat swings be put on the set containing 4 swings**

## 22. USE OF MILL MEADOWS

- i. Members received and noted the calendar of events for Mill and Marsh Meadows, Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground.
- ii. Members considered the following requests for the use of Mill Meadows as follows:-
  - a. **What:** A professional Shakespeare production of a Midsummer Night's Dream by the theatre company "Reading between the Lines". The group is also taking part in this year's Living Advent Calendar.  
**Location:** The Adventure Playground at Mill Meadows and the surrounding grass area – see attached email for more information.  
**When:** 20 – 23 July 2016

The Chairman advised that more information was being gathered regarding this request and the feasibility of the Adventure Playground was being assessed. Members were therefore asked if they were in agreement in principal for this type of event to take place at Mill Meadows.

Members felt the staging of a Shakespeare play at Mill Meadows would be ideal although the feasibility of using the Adventure Playground was questioned.

Members agreed the proposed dates should be provisionally booked to ensure the production could go ahead.

After further discussion it was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

**that agreement be given in principle to the staging of a production of a Shakespeare at Mill Meadows - subject to clarification of the details and that further information be provided to the Recreation and Amenities Committee (should a decision need to be made before the next meeting of the Parks Sub Committee eg costs, location etc)**

- b. **What:** A production of Hooray for Mr Toad! by the Bart Lee Theatre Group.  
**Location:** on the grass by the Bandstand, Mill Meadows  
**When:** Summer 2016

Members agreed this production would complement the River and Rowing Museum's Wind in the Willows exhibition and were in agreement in principle.

After further discussion it was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

**that agreement be given in principle to the staging of a production of "Hooray Mr Toad!" at Mill Meadows subject to clarification of the details and that further information be provided to the Recreation and Amenities Committee (should a decision need to be made before the next meeting of the Parks Sub Committee eg costs, location etc)**

- c. **What:** Music on the Meadows MOTM 16– a free family music festival  
**Location:** Mill Meadows  
**When:** Saturday 16 July 2016

Members noted this event had taken place in 2013 and 2014 and not in 2015. It was agreed this was an excellent free, family friendly, community event and members were keen for it to take place again however a member asked that a condition be included that the MOTM signage around the town be removed within 1 week of the event.

After further discussion it was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

**that permission be given for the Music on the Meadows to be held at Mill Meadows on Saturday 16 July 2016 – the hours and conditions to be the same as for the event held in 2014 and subject to the organisers ensuring all promotional signage is removed within one week of the event**

- d. **What:** Thames Path Challenge – Finish of a 100km walk, jog or run from Putney Bridge to Henley. As this fund raising event is organised by a commercial company a fee is charged. This is the third year of this event, which has run smoothly for the last 2 years and the deposit has been returned in full for both years.

**When:** Friday 9 September 2016 – set up, Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 September 2016 – event  
**Location:** Mill Meadows

Members noted that this event has been very well organised over the past 2 years and **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

**that permission be given for the Thames Path Challenge to take place on Friday 9 September 2015 (set up), Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 September 2015 (event) subject to the same conditions and costs as in 2014**

- e. **What:** Henley Highwayman Swimming Event  
An application will be considered by the Town and Community Committee for the use of the Market Place on the Saturday and Sunday for the cycling and running events.  
**When:** Friday 10 June 2016  
**Location:** Mill Meadows

Members agreed this was a successful event last year and **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

**that permission be given for the Henley Highwayman swimming event to take place at Mill Meadows on Friday 10 June 2016 with the same terms and conditions as in 2015. Members noted an application will be considered by the Town and Community Committee regarding the use of the Market Place for the cycling and running events on Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 June 2016**

## **23. CONSULTATION**

The Chairman updated members on plans to consult with residents regarding future provision of amenities at Freemans Meadow, Makins Recreation Ground and Mill/Marsh Meadows.

The Chairman advised that following investigation it was found to be more economic to have an advert in the Henley magazine (deadline Friday 16 October 2015) accompanied by an article regarding the consultation process rather than an insert and it was hoped to have this placed in the autumn issue. In addition it was planned to have the questionnaire available on the Town Council's website, survey monkey, a stand in the Market Place on a Saturday, and local shops would be asked including Waitrose and Tesco Stores Ltd. The questions would be the same as those used at the consultation held at Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground in July.

After discussion members **RESOLVED**

**that the verbal update from the Chairman be noted**

*Post Meeting note – the questions in the consultation carried out in July were:-*

- What is the one thing you like most about this park?
- What is the one thing you like least about this park?
- To help us understand what the majority of people would like to see in the recreation park, please let us know your top three priorities from the list below:- outdoor gym; municipal tennis courts (Freemans); skate park

- (Makins) outdoor table tennis; football pitches; seating; play equipment for toddlers to be added to existing playground; keep the park as it is
- How important would it be to improve the horticulture to soften/brighten up the park? For instance:- flowerbeds; shrubs; planters (Scale of 1 (very important) to 5 (not important))
- Would you get involved in any of the below community projects on the recreation ground:- gardening; litter picking; helping to arrange community events; other (please specify)
- if you answered no, please can you let us know what would prevent you being involved:- I do not have enough time to be involved; I am not physically able to become involved; I am not interested in community involvement; I do not feel it will make a difference; other (please specify)
- If you would like to be kept up to date with information and be involved in future consultation, please let us know your contact details

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

- i. The Chairman gave a verbal update regarding progress on the provision of amenities at Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground and advised that whilst investigating this project it has been acknowledged that expert advice would be of great benefit to ensure the improvements to the parks are of a high quality, appropriate and are delivered in a professional manner.

There is a choice to the level of advice which can be obtained eg it could include:- consultation with residents to provide what is wanted, planning, procurement, health and safety requirements, permissions, wildlife provision, specialist advice eg on playground provision, horticulture, location of equipment, fencing, seating etc

It was noted that it is now acceptable for local government expertise to be shared with other Councils - an example of this is Henley Town Council outsourcing its legal work to Oxfordshire County Council. In a similar vein an opportunity has arisen to liaise more closely with Reading Brought Council (RBC) and in particular their professional expertise in landscaping of parks. An initial meeting has taken place with the Chairman and representatives from RBC at Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground and further information will be presented to this Sub Committee and the Recreation and Amenities Sub Committee for consideration.

The Chairman highlighted that working with another Council has particular benefits as they understand Council procedure, the challenges Council's face and the requirements for a public park. It would be intended to have a phased approach to improving the parks could be planned and budgeted for over a 3 year period

The Chairman asked members for their initial thoughts on working with a professional landscape architect to improve Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground and the following comments were made:-

- the benefits of professional advice were recognised and it was felt it would help ensure improvements were of a high standard, were considered and were delivered professionally. Members were very interested to see the initial response and ideas
- liaison with all interested parties would take place including Councillors, residents, nearby organisations etc.

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

**that further investigation be undertaken into consulting with a professional Landscape Architect regarding the improvements to Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground**

- ii. Members received and noted an update from Mr Colin Brathwaite regarding the skatepark at Makins Recreation Ground as follows:-

*“Working in conjunction with HTC, the community volunteer group the Henley Skatepark Initiative are making fantastic progress to create a modern spray concrete skatepark to cater for skateboarding, BMX riding, rollerblades and scooter riding.*

*Our focus will be on a safe family orientated free-to-use sports facility. We will increase the sports provision, bringing Henley in line with other surrounding towns by creating a facility that will last for decades with little to no maintenance required.*

*We have site permission, full Council support, a supplier, full planning permission and £180,000 raised so far. We are confident that we will raise the remaining money required and have a funding strategy in place to achieve this.*

*We hope to proceed with a build in the summer of 2016. We will fully landscape around the new facility with paths, benches, shrubs and semi-mature trees.”*

- iii. Members received, considered and noted a proposal from Ms Catherine Notaras regarding providing cloud hedging at Makins Recreation Ground.

A member noted that it must be remembered that, first and foremost, Freemans Meadow and Makins Recreation Ground were for the use of the public and although wildlife enhancement was valued it must be planned in a way as to not conflict with public use.

Members noted increased planting in both parks were being considered.

## **25. FENCING AT MAKINS RECREATION GROUND**

The Chairman gave an update on the proposed fencing at Makins and advised she had met with the Henley Scouts and the Henley Wildlife Group, both who had reservations regarding the type of fencing.

A suggestion had been made that the fencing be placed partway down the bank so that it did not appear as tall yet still provided an effective barrier. However following discussions with a fencing contractor it was felt the stability of the fence would be compromised as the ground was not as firm.

Members recognised the need for an effective barrier for health and safety reasons but also that the aesthetics were important. A number of options were considered including railings and putting up a semi-temporary fence eg chestnut paling and planting a hedge. It was acknowledged that chestnut paling fencing may be prone to being damaged but could be repaired. Members noted this matter was due to the

considered by the Recreation and Amenities Committee on 20 October 2015.

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

**that further investigation be undertaken as to the type of fencing to be used at the top of the steep bank at Makins Recreation Ground including the planting of a hedge and a semi-temporary fence eg chestnut paling to provide a barrier whilst the hedge grew**

**26. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was set as Friday 29 January 2016 at 9.00 am.

The meeting ended at 11 am.

bw

Chairman