

**MINUTES OF THE FRIENDS OF VALLEY GARDENS MEETING
7.30pm – 25th February 2010**

Present: Helen & Sophie McCallum, Paula Collier, Simon Collier, B Taylor, D Edwards, G McCormick, J Blayney, P Blayney, S Wood, AJ Golden, Margaret Barker, Geoff Scurrah, Margaret Bruce, Tony Sissons, John Jakes, Tom Holleman, Marge Holleman, Dennis Moorhouse, Ian Gardner, Jane Gardner, Jean Burnett, Kate Dawson, Trish McLaughlin, Jean Butterfield

Apologies: Nigel Heptinstall, Harriet Andrew, Richard Cooper, Reg Marsh, Pat Marsh, Don McKenzie, Patrick Kilburn, Claire Kelley

Chair: Trish McLaughlin (TMc), Parks Development Manager

Minutes: Kate Dawson (KD), Parks Development Officer

1. Welcome and Introductions

Apologies from Patrick Kilburn, TMc acted as Chair in his absence.

2. Minutes from previous meeting – 21.01.2010

- 2.1 Page 4, point 9 - unlike advised in the previous minutes, there is a cycling byelaw in place for Valley Gardens, so the 'no cycling' signs on the paths are being repainted and the signage is being renewed. The byelaw states that cycling in Valley Gardens is generally not permitted, but permission to access (by bicycle) a specific area can be granted (i.e. a Skate Park).
- 2.2 The Police have been seen cycling through Valley Gardens. PCSO Jakes said that they are allowed to in order to carry out their duties. However, they are unable to enforce byelaws.
- 2.3 An apology to Helen McCallum as her name was spelt incorrectly on the previous minutes.
- 2.4 A view was aired stating that it was felt the minutes were selective – a previous meeting included a discussion about toilets this was omitted from the minutes.
- 2.5 What is the advice if youngsters are causing problems/damage in Valley Gardens? – Not to approach them but call the Police if causing damage etc. If a criminal act is taking place call 999, otherwise call the non-emergency Police number which is 0845 6060247. Please also advise the Council of any issues that are taking place.

3. Constitution and Governance Arrangements

- 3.1 As yet no comments have been received by KD, if anyone has comments on the draft Constitution please contact KD (kate.dawson@harrogate.gov.uk or phone 0845 300 6091)
- 3.2 A question was asked whether Officer positions should be elected before the Constitution is agreed. The Constitution details the need for members, but without defining who the members are and how you become one there is difficulty in taking this further. TMc explained this is why there is a need for Officers to be elected and why there should be a Constitution agreed upon. Once the officers are in position, the Committee and the group can agree how the group will be governed and what constitutes a Member.

3.3 Once the officers are in position it was agreed the Constitution will be moved on.

4. Officer Positions

- 4.1 Three names have been put forward along with a brief CV (outlining their suitability) for positions on the committee.
- 4.2 Tom Holleman (self nomination) for Chair was seconded by Doreen Edwards
Jane Blayney (nominated by Harriet Andrew and Desmond Smeaton) for Vice Chair was seconded by Geoff Scurrah
Helen McCallum (self nomination) for Secretary was seconded by Mr Golden
- 4.3 No one has volunteered or been nominated for the position of Treasurer. This is a very important position and to start the group off TMc said that the Council will offer £250 seed funding once a bank account has been set up (this is offered to all new groups being set up to support Parks). At future meetings the group will need to discuss how to set up the bank account, whether to charge a membership fee, other methods of fundraising etc. Anyone with financial experience (even if not a current member of the Friends of Valley Gardens) please get in touch.
- 4.4 For clarification purposes Tom explained he would be away from Harrogate usually between June 15th – September 15th annually, the Vice Chair will be happy to cover this period as necessary.

5. New Zealand Garden Update

- 5.1 Preparation of the land is ongoing to create landscaping. Chestnut paling fence has been installed. The first delivery of the plants arrived 25.02.10. Planting will start w/c 01.03.10 at the toilet block area. Volunteers can help with this on Tues/Wed/Thurs but you must complete and return (to KD) a volunteer form before working on site. KD will then contact you with suitable dates and times. At the minute it is planned for afternoons from 1.00pm for a couple of hours.
- 5.2 All volunteers must wear sturdy boots (if possible steel toe-capped), gloves and hi-vis jackets will be provided for the session, as will any necessary tools.
- 5.3 The next plant delivery for the New Zealand area is likely to be during the third week of March. Planting will take place late March/early April depending upon the weather.

6. Scroll Bed

- 6.1 Sue Wood provided an update – this new planting is to support RHS Harlow Carr celebrates their 60th Anniversary this year. It is joint working between them and Harrogate Borough Council and is designed to help celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity (2010). The Scroll bed is located close to the Café and will consist of herbaceous, perennials and grasses such as miscanthus, persicaria and stipa, Sue showed a sketch to those interested, detailing the planting. If the planting is successful it may be extended in the future. Interpretation panels will be installed explaining the area to all visitors.
- 6.2 Planting will take place on Monday 8th March from 9.30am volunteers are welcome.

7. Skate Park

- 7.1 TMc provided an update. At the Cabinet meeting on 03.02.10 the proposal to install a Skate Park in Valley Gardens was approved. Cllr Richard Cooper would like to thank everyone who submitted any comments in relation to this proposal (whether for or against

it).

- 7.2 A project programme has been produced. The short-listing of companies to be invited to tender is already taking place.
- 7.3 A project brief will then be sent out to the short listed companies, the companies will return a tender including the proposed design, costs and materials.
- 7.4 It is hoped to submit a planning application in early June (to which the public can comment/respond) with a decision expected in August.
- 7.5 There will be a project board established consisting of Harrogate Borough Council staff, a potential skate park user, and other representatives. This group will work on the plans for the Skate Park, which will include rules of use and how it will be managed in the future. A separate user group will be set up so they can work with the Council to establish rules etc and ensure it is enjoyed by all and that young people are involved in the planning management of the skate park.
- 7.6 If Planning permission is granted it is anticipated that the build will start in October, this will take around 10 weeks to complete (it is acknowledged that this is the wettest season and perhaps not the ideal time but these are the scheduled dates). Harrogate Borough Council Parks Team will keep everyone updated.
- 7.7 There are no plans to install the temporary skate park in Valley Gardens this summer, it costs over £5,000 this money will be used to provide the permanent skate park.
- 7.8 Landscaping will be costed within the tender process. It was stressed the skate park with lots of new planting would not necessarily mix well together – the whole area will be maintained by the current parks team in the future.
- 7.9 Chris Green, Architectural Liaison Officer with North Yorkshire Police will review the plans as a matter of course.
- 7.10 The Council's Community Safety team will be working to consider people's concerns about the skate park. There is a concern that there will be noise late at night, the area will not be fenced initially and if there is an ongoing problem that cannot be managed the decision to fence the area will be reviewed after approximately 6 months.
- 7.11 It was raised that the minutes of the Cabinet meeting state that £78,000 of the skate park funding (more than half the allocated funding) is from the reserve fund/investment fund – will this result in a cut in spending on other parks due to the Skate Park installation and could details about the impact on parks maintenance be explained, and why such a large amount is being spent on a small number of users – a minority group? The attendee felt the group had previously not been clearly informed where all the money was coming from and that information had been omitted and details avoided.

Cllr Butterfield (representing Cabinet) said that this was not her understanding and she believed that the funds were from existing budgets and there would not be any significant impact on future budgets. Patrick Kilburn had previously stated that there would not be an impact on Council Tax payments or impact on any service.

It was requested that allegations are not made until the group is presented with all the

facts, which would be issued with the minutes (this will follow the distribution of the minutes due to PK being on leave) and will include a detailed breakdown of the budget for the skate park and where the money is from. This can then be discussed at the next meeting.

The question as to how many users can be on the skate park at once was raised. This relates to the budget available - £140,000 is available which should allow for a suitably sized skate park. The number of users depends on the type of user (BMX, Skateboard, Skates, etc), which is why it is important to have them involved with the design process.

8. Any Other Business

- 8.1 It is important to let people know about the group as lots of people are unaware of its existence, please mention it to family and friends, feel free to ask people to contact Tom and invite them to the meeting. One member only found out that there was a group being established after reading Yorkshire Life, this is despite notices being displayed around the park and press releases publicising previous meetings.
- 8.2 If anyone knows of any regular play area users please ask them to feedback any comments (good or bad) to the group and come along to some meetings.
- 8.3 Kids need to be involved in the skate park planning and the group as a whole, we need to get them on board so we can discuss issues re football in colonnades.
- 8.4 Play Area – modifications to the Castle are now completed, two sides have been replaced with metal bars, children and their parents/guardians seem to like it and there have been no issues reported so far.
- 8.5 A notice board is being installed by the main entrance in the next month or so. This will be an opportunity for the Friends Group to display information.
- 8.6 It was agreed that KD will meet with the new Officers prior to the next meeting
- 8.7 There will be a press release about the appointment of new officers as soon as possible to help with promotion of the group, as many people have not heard about it.
- 8.8 There are two Safer Neighbourhood Meetings planned – Harlow Moor area (09.03.10 at the Crown Hotel) and Town Centre area (16.03.10). Representatives from Harrogate Borough Council, Police and others will be present and all issues can be discussed.

12. Next Meeting

Thursday 8th April 2010, 7.00pm. In the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Crescent Gardens. Please bring a friend and/or mention it to all interested parties.

All agenda items to be forwarded to Helen McCallum (Secretary) helenm534@aol.com no later than 26th March 2010.

Other contact details

Tom Holleman (Chair), email hollemanengland@yahoo.com

Jane Blayney (Vice Chair) jane_blayney@btinternet.com

Please note that unless you provide your contact details to Helen McCallum (or have already notified KD that you are happy for them to be passed to the group) you may not receive the minutes and agenda for future meetings.