



Friends of Valley Gardens

Harrogate's Award-Winning Park

Minutes of the Meeting held Thursday, 27 May 2010

Present: T Holleman, H McCallum, Martin Mann, Mary Mann, D Smeaton, G McCormick, A Jordan, S Collier, P Collier, J Clark, R Johnston, J Cater, J Jakes, P Kilburn, J Clark, J Agars, H Daniels, D Edwards, P Leigh, S Leigh

1. Welcome and Introductions and thanks for attendance were given.

2. Apologies for absence

H Andrew, J Blayney, S Wood, P Blayney, M Bruce, D MacKenzie, P Marsh, R Marsh, N Heptinstall, R Bentley, M Bentley, C Bowes, M Smeaton, T Sissons, D Moorhouse

3. Minutes of the Meeting held 8 April 2010

Approved and signed as an accurate record.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 Walk through Valley Gardens

Concerns had been expressed via email that discussion and decisions did not appear to be taking place in the meetings. One example given was regarding the walk through the gardens that had been planned to determine projects for consideration, and that this would not take place until 28 July, therefore who had determined which projects would be undertaken? The Chair has responded in full to this member but confirmed that Officers had looked at a broad range of potential projects, discussing these with members of HBC for their practicality and narrowing down the list to four projects which would be presented later in the meeting for the consideration of members present.

4.2 Signage at Entrance

An estimate has been requested and is pending in order to turn the sign around.

4.3 Ice Cream

Comments have been received that, despite signage saying ice cream is available, the kiosk has been closed. It was confirmed that this facility is a franchise and, whilst there is an agreement for limited set opening times, beyond this is at the discretion of the franchisee. Ice creams are also available from the games and parks hut.

4.4 Dirty Stream

It was confirmed that the stream is cleaned annually. Water drains run into the stream and it can get dirty due to heavy rainfall.

5. Status Report

The Chair reported on the following progress:

- Bank account has been set up with HBSC and set up funding received from HBC.
- Internet banking is now established.
- The Group have joined BTCV – British Trust for Conservation Volunteers which enables access to liability insurance at approx £150 p/a. An application is in progress.
- The website www.FOVG.co.uk has many additions, is kept up to date. It includes detailed history, projects and forthcoming events.

- The Chair has met with Officers of Friends of Roundhay Park in Leeds and has undertaken a full tour of the park where ideas were given and experiences of past projects shared. The Skate Park was visited and it was noted that the Park was experiencing no ASB issues. The Chair requested that FOVG join Friends of Roundhay Park at a cost of £10 and this was agreed.
- A meeting has taken place with Malcolm Neesam and he is willing to talk to FOVG as a fund raiser. He has many photos of Valley Gardens which he is happy to share. He reported that that pillars at the Green Park entrance have no historical importance.
- The Chair has met with HBC to discuss potential projects and their viability.
- A tour of the possible Woodland Walk project has taken place.
- All potential projects appear to be viable but it was stressed that we must focus to be successful.
- A discussion has taken place with Sam Cryer regarding the possible replacement of the missing column at the Green Park entrance. He has confirmed that this is not financially viable.
- It is suggested that we invite someone of importance/ relevance to become FOVG President. This was agreed and a nomination slip will be emailed to members for their suggestions.
- Membership was confirmed as 83 with 20 paid. A note will be sent to those not participating asking them to confirm their ongoing interest. Membership is confirmed as 1 Jan – 31 December. Pro-rata membership payments are not applicable.
- Volunteers are required to staff booths at forthcoming events. Names to be given to the Chair, Vice-Chair or Secretary.
- Fundraising ideas are required and volunteers required for sub committed to progress projects.
- Ideas for speakers at future meetings are welcome. Please consider and send suggestions.
- FOVG have been asked to support the idea of a fountain in Harrogate. This was agreed and the Chair will investigate further.

6. Officer Position of Youth Representative

A nomination was received and approved for Joe Agars, aged 14. This was approved and Joe accepted. He is keen to be the voice for his age group. Welcome to Joe.

7. Determination of Projects for FOVG Support

The Chair briefed members of projects for consideration, there was discussion regarding alternative / additional projects. Full details available on the website.

It was noted that discussions have taken place with HBC about practicality and needs.

7.1 Magnesia Well Educational Centre

Idea to access, refurbish and open up with information boards including one for FOVG. It was queried whether this could be a base for FOVG but confirmed there would be insufficient space. However, it may be possible to use the maintenance store for the holding of table, chairs, information board to use at events.

To further this project, funding may be available from Heritage Lottery funds.

It was noted that this project would be costly longer term and would require grant funding.

7.2 Woodland Walk

The idea would be to create pathways on the south side of the stream, increase planting and erect bridges. This would open up a large portion of the park currently unused and would highlight key features of the gardens. For practicality, this project would have to be broken up into phases. A project sub-committee would be required to progress this.

7.3 Green Park Entrance

It was acknowledged that this entrance currently gives a poor impression. The cost to replace the missing pillar and crown has been investigated and is unrealistic and, as stated above, has no historical meaning. It would be preferred to look at ways of changing the entrance completely. Suggested later in the meeting that the other pillar be removed, the crown used elsewhere, and a new entrance established. This was recommended for consideration by HBC.

7.4 Far East Garden Refurbishment (know as Japanese Garden)

Suggested that the “Japanese Garden” be extended to far eastern countries. Fund raising opportunities could be available. The garden could be refurbished with far eastern structures and plants.

7.5 Next Steps in progressing projects

Determine priorities and set up project sub-committees to progress and report back.
Volunteers required.

Noted that fund raising is made easier when projects are underway.

P Kilburn pointed out that costs quoted by contractors can be reduced if members and friends offer physical labour for cleaning and planting of areas. Building costs would remain static.

Full and lengthy discussion took place and voting on the highlighted projects resulted in:-

Woodland Walk – 11 in favour (majority vote)

Educational Centre – 0

Entrance – 0

Far Eastern Garden – 0

It was therefore agreed that the Woodland Walk project would be priority. A project team is required and HBC will obtain professional advice to plan and cost. The largest costs will be for bridges and planting. It was confirmed from discussions with and advice from similar groups, that funding via grants and businesses is more likely to be forthcoming when focusing on grand concepts.

Physical help would be welcome from the younger members and the Army Apprentice College may be able to assist.

HBC confirmed that they can assist with smaller issues such as signage etc.

Regarding the Far Eastern Garden, 4 members were in favour of researching this further and possible assistance from Chriptomists. (Is this the correct spelling? Never heard of this term before) A Jordan agreed to look at their plaque for information and email to the Chair. S Collier also agreed to investigate further how this project could be progressed in the future. (Tom- can you check that I have the volunteers correct?)

Nine members were in favour of investigating possible Heritage Lottery funding for the Educational Centre and S Leigh agreed to check this.

Noted that on 12 August representatives from New Zealand will be visiting the NZ garden at approximately 4.30 pm. The Chair showed slides of the recent NZ sculptures undertaken by www.chainsawsculptures.co.uk. Thanks were given to D Edwards and her son for providing sketches that were used in discussions prior to the sculptures being undertaken.

8. Communications

The Secretary agreed to draft a press release (to be approved by HBC) for the Harrogate Advertiser. It is hoped that the group can then have a regular slot in the Clubs and Societies section. Flyers and newsletters considered to be too costly and time consuming and all information is available on the website together with opportunities to suggest ideas. A Facebook will be established by J Agars and H McCallum. This will be inviting to the younger members and users of the park.

9. Skate Park

P Kiburn gave an update on the Skate Park:-

Companies have been invited to submit proposals for design and build plans. Six were shortlisted but one has withdrawn. The remaining five are invited to give presentations to a panel consisting of: HBC Officials, 2 skaters, 2 bmxr's, Police, and Environmental Health. The preferred proposal will be placed on HBC and FOVG website for feedback. The plans will then commence the planning process and consultation.

10. Police Update

PCSO John Jakes reported on an increase in ASB due to the warm weather, people drinking, having BBQ's and the problem of litter being left behind. There was also a report of racist behaviour, but unfortunately, upon arrival of the Police, the complaints had left the scene. All users are urged to ring the Police on 0845 60 60 24 7 if they have any concerns about behaviour. Criminal damage witnessed can be phoned in on 999. It was requested that the contact numbers be displayed in strategic points around the gardens so that quick action can be taken.

11. Questions from the Community

11.1 Are BBQ's allowed in Valley Gardens?

No, we discourage the use of BBQ's in any open spaces but it is not illegal and there is not a specific Bye Law within the Bye Laws for the gardens.

11.2 Can more signs be put in place directing to the toilets?

P Kilburn is happy to consider this as an option. It was noted that these concerns are raised via visitors who are unfamiliar with the gardens layout. Further consideration will be given to this question during the walk through in July.

11.3 Can some protection be installed to the ceilings in the Sun Parlours to prevent football damage?

Development Services are in agreement that the damage is frustrating and that an unobtrusive resolve is required. They will endeavour to find an acceptable solution to prevent further damage to the plaster work. They advise that repairs to the existing damage are in hand and completion will be within the next 3 weeks.

11.4 Can "No Football" signs be placed around the Sun Parlours and Bandstand?

Signs will be purchased and installed on the Sun Parlours. It was requested that these include the Police contact number. Fencing seems to have eliminated damage to the Bandstand but this will be reviewed at a later date if required.

11.5 Can the fence in front of the bandstand be removed or replaced?

The gate / fence was installed on a trial basis in an attempt to reduce the amount of damage occurring. The outcome of restricting access has been phenomenal in reducing vandalism. Subject to funding, Development Services, the temporary gates will be replaced with more appropriate ones. Contractors are to be invited to supply quotations with a timeframe of 5 – 7 weeks. P Kilburn will bring proposals to the group for agreement.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 T Holleman will be in the USA from 16 June – 17 September. J Blayney will take over the role of Chair during this period. The website will continue to be maintained.

12.2 A leader is required for the Woodland Walk sub-committee. G McCormick and D Edwards volunteered to be members. **Tom - What did Sheila agree to? I have written "either"?!**

12.3 Volunteers require badges and briefing packs.

12.4 Agreed that paid members will be issued with membership cards.

13. Date of Next Meeting

Confirmed as Wednesday, 28 July, at 7 pm. Meet at the entrance to Valley Gardens for a walk around the Park lead by Patrick Kilburn of HBC. In case of rain, the meeting will be in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Crescent Gardens

Helen McCallum
FOVG Secretary
28 May 2010