

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ROTHAMSTED PARK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Held in the Council Chamber, Harpenden Town Council, Leyton Road, Harpenden on Tuesday 21st September 2011 at 7.00pm.

Members In Attendance:

Councillor Stuart Roberts (St Albans District Council)
Councillor Julie Bell (St Albans District Council)
Councillor Simon Leadbeater (Harpenden Town Council)
Councillor Dean Russell (St Albans District Council)

Present:

Andrew Smithard (Leisure Connection Ltd)
Callum Goodall (John O'Conner (Grounds Maintenance) Ltd)
John Bagshaw (Harpenden Town Council)
Ellie Tyler (Youth Town Council)

Officers In Attendance:

Ann Austin (Sports and Leisure Services Officer)
Nick Sherriff (Parks and Green Spaces Officer)

Apologies:

Dorothy Mills (Local Resident)
Ian Hunt (Harpenden Colts)
Bryan Thompson (Harpenden Swimming Club)
Jon Green (Green Spaces Manager)
Emma Payne (Harpenden Youth Town Council)
Councillor Pat Kent (Harpenden Town Council)
Councillor Mary Maynard (Harpenden Town Council)
Councillor Mike Wakely (St Albans District Council)
Councillor Daniel Chichester-Miles (St Albans District Council)

1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Stuart Roberts was elected Chairman for the 2011/12 Municipal year.

2. **REPLACEMENT MEMBERS**

There were no replacement members.

3. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Management Committee held on 22nd March 2011 were amended to include Cllr Roberts in attendance.

4. **NOTES AND ACTIONS FROM THIS MEETING**

a) **Harpenden Leisure Centre Oral Report:**

Andy Smithard, Business Manager, read out the report which is attached to the minutes (see Appendix 1).

The Committee considered the various items raised in the Leisure Centre's report, and noted the following:

Cllr Leadbeater said that there had been an improvement in the Centre in general, but he still had concerns over people not showering before swimming and the associated risks regarding contaminates. Education and awareness for the users needed to be improved. John Bagshaw commented that an article could be included in the next Town Council newsletter.

Action: The Centre Manager to write an article on the subject for inclusion in the next newsletter.

Andy Smithard is moving to a new site in Wembley. The Committee thanked him for the

b) **Parks Report** (see Appendix 2):

The Committee considered the various items raised in the Parks report, and noted the following

Skate Park:

Harpenden Youth Town Council (HTYC) raised a number of issues regarding the skate park for the Committee to note:

- The installation of fencing on two sides of the skate park
- The installation of a BMX track in the old putting green area. Ellie Tyler said there were a lot of young people who would do the work themselves with spades etc.

Action:

Nick Sherriff said that he would investigate the installation of a fence on two sides of the skate park.

Nick Sherriff said that if the BMX riders wanted a track, funding would need to be sought and a professional company should carry out the work. Some Committee Members wanted to investigate HTYC's suggestion of letting the BMX riders carry out the work. Nick Sherriff agreed to feed this suggestion back to the Green Spaces Manager.

5. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

a) Youth Shelter:

Ellie Tyler commented that the Youth Shelter Project had been cancelled due to funding issues. Cllr Bell thought that there had been development regarding this project and would investigate and feed back to Committee.

Action: - Cllr Bell to feed back to Committee

b) The role of the Committee

Members questioned the role of the Committee and felt that they would like it to take on a more supportive role, rather than its current consultative role. They felt that due to current arrangements regarding the terms of reference, the issues/suggestions were not being escalated to the relevant levels within the Council.

Action: The Committee suggested that there should be an extra meeting to discuss the current Terms of Reference and current Key Stakeholders of the Park. A meeting date was pencilled in for 29th November 2011.

c) Draft committee minutes

It was suggested that the Committee minutes be sent out in draft format well in advance of the next meeting, and not only with the Agenda.

Action: Nick Sherriff to investigate this request.

Finding: The minutes of the meetings are sent out in draft format as soon as they are written – the last draft minutes were sent out mid April.

d) Poor membership and public attendance at the meetings

The Committee felt that there had been a decline in attendance over the past few years and that there should be an additional meeting to draw up a list of Stakeholders for the Park.

Action: see action 5 b) above.

e) 10-15 year Vision for the Park

The Committee Members felt that there needed to be a long term vision for the Park. This would help guide the 5 year management plan and also allow Committee members to plan and discuss these aims with their colleagues to hopefully secure commitments for its future development and improvement.

Cllr Leadbeater commented that he felt the Park was losing some of its enjoyment due to past improvements, and asked that future improvements to the park were in keeping with its past layout.

6. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 29th November 2011 in the Council Chamber, Harpenden Town Council, Leyton Road, Harpenden at 7.00pm.

The meeting ended at 8.45pm.

(SIGNED)

CHAIRMAN

Harpenden Forum report September 2011

QUALITY

The complex has maintained its Quest registration at Highly Commended status and has also undergone other assessments such as National Pool Safety award and The Institute of Qualified Lifeguards verification audit.

STAFFING

In terms of staffing we have had a number of departures mainly due to the departure of students who have left the local area to attend university.

We have had a number of team members who have enrolled and completed courses through Lifetime Health and Fitness such as:

Business Administration L3 NVQ
Operations L2 NVQ
Personal training L3 NVQ

We have recently joined a apprentice scheme offering young people the opportunity to gain training, qualifications and work experience and have 3 new team members enrolled on the scheme.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND MAINTENANCE

The site has continued to maintain the facility to a high standard with regular investment taking place in the form of regular redecoration of High footfall areas such as Fitness areas, Corridors and Circulation areas. We have also replaced and upgraded Gymnastics equipment including trampolines and Fitness equipment such as Free Weights and Steps.

The external funding from the Lawn tennis association to complete an upgrade to the external courts within the park has now been approved with works due to start over the next few weeks.

CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

The Crèche is still well attended as parents take advantage of the excellent childcare service whilst using our wide range of activities. In terms of attendance Monday, Tuesday and Friday morning sessions are continuing to prove most popular with 5 - 6 children placed on the waiting list for each session. The crèche 10 for 8 session cards, has continued to be promoted via both reception and crèche teams providing excellent value for money in comparison to the private establishments within the local vicinity

Although Dry Courses have provided a good level of service and attendance on most is good, we are currently in the process of carrying out a programme review to ensure we can continue to meet the needs of our users and target groups by providing courses that are in demand throughout the week.

The Playscheme which was run throughout the holidays was popular in providing a childcare service for parents within the district on both Mornings and full days over 800 attendances in total.

FITNESS

Group training classes throughout the year are still proved very popular with all user groups, many of the classes are over subscribed and which prompted a review of underperforming classes in consultation with both instructors and customers with a new programme relaunched in June. We hope that we can satisfy demand for more balanced programme of High impact, low impact and holistic classes.

The Junior Harpers programme and Extended Opportunities sessions delivered through local Schools network have been fantastic and we are looking to improve this further in partnership with the SAASH team, sessions include Netball, Fencing, Archery courses and potentially a DJ session on a Friday evening working with users of the skate park.

The GP Referral Scheme and Cardiac rehabilitation sessions delivered through SAASH have continued to delivered on the site and a great deal of members exiting the scheme have gone on to undertake mainstream membership within the facility.

The Centre has trialed a number of different fifty plus sessions following consultation with users across the contract such as Tea Dance and Zumba which despite efforts to work with groups such as the Harpenden Seniors Forum were not successful in terms of attendance. We are currently working with SADC to review our offering and are now offering 50 plus Harpers gym sessions within the centre.

SWIMMING

The Swim School programme has continued to develop with 91 % utilisation across all courses. Improved programming of the pool layout has allowed us to accommodate an additional 100 plus swimmers at the lower levels and the use of Townsend swimming pool has enabled us to keep waiting lists at a minimum.

Casual swimming usage was popular throughout the summer months and we have seen a growth in swim only memberships over the last 6 months.

The pool has offered a number of discounted swimming lessons for the over 60's which have been fairly well attended and we hope that they will continue to grow.

TENNIS

Although the Harpenden Tennis programme has continued to run, we are hopeful that the development works taking place on the site will enable the programme to grow further with the support of the LTA. More recently we have accommodated the displaced players and coaches from the Batchwood Tennis Centre.

MISC

The sports centre has continued to act as a point of call for First aid incidents at the Skate Park and provided assistance where necessary.

**Report to the Rothamsted Park Management Committee
Meeting to be held on Tuesday 21st September 2011**

Green Flag

Rothamsted Park has been awarded a Green Flag for 2011/12. The overall score improved from last year and the judges comments are attached.

Sports areas

Committee Members are asked to report any concerns.

Landscaping

The Rose Garden

The two central borders were sown with a mixed annual flower seed in early Summer due to the dry conditions in Spring. The trial went really well and we are now looking to roll this out to other selected beds in the District (see attached photographs).

Leyton Road Entrance

The new bed at Leyton Road has not suffered any further vandalism and more shrubs will be planted in the bed to replace the ones that have died.

Amenbury Lane entrance from the car park

The Green Flag Judges commented on how the new shrub bed has greatly improved the entrance to the Park. Once again any plants that did not survive will be re-planted this Autumn.

Skate Park

GBH Engineering has reformed and replaced the lips (the areas where the ramp meets the floor) with concrete to reduce the trip hazards. The Skate Park was painted last week. The signs have been ordered and will be installed in October.

Use of Park by independent companies

Most of the independent companies using the Park have been contacted and licences granted.

New Park Leaflet

An updated leaflet has now been produced and will be handed out at the meeting.

Grants and Funding

£15,000 has been designated to Rothamsted Park through the Harpenden Town Council's 'Voice Your Choice' Scheme. This money will be used to provide and install a zip wire and bucket swing for young people.

Harpenden Rotary Club are looking at donating £2,500 to improve/refurbish the front entrance gates on Leyton Road and would like the views of Management Committee Members.

Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) and Tennis Courts

The tennis courts will be resurfaced at the start of October and the works will take approximately 8 weeks. This improvement work will be paid by a grant from the LTA.

Work on the MUGA will start in October and it will be upgraded to a third generation surface. This has been financed through the Council's Capital Works Programme.



**Rothamsted Park
St Albans District Council
Green Flag Award 2011/2012**

Bandscores

Desk Assessment	0-9	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-30			
Field Assessment	20-29	30-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-70
Overall score	30-44	45-54	55-59	60-65	66-69	70-74	75-79	80+

Status - Pass

Overall band score 70 - 74

Desk Assessment Feedback

Band score 20 - 24

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
Presentation	The management plan is written in an accessible style with several authors adding their expertise and experience. It is comprehensive and shows commitment from the managing organisation to delivering a quality green space	More colour photos to provide context within plan. Local area demographics need to be updated currently showing info from 2001, 2005 and 2006. Include results of 12 month cycle trial.
Health, Safety & Security	Good use of Modern Technology to record Playground Inspections.	May need to re-evaluate fire risk assessment for adjacent fields given BBQ activity takes place during summer and aspiration to increase number of units. A3.2.2 still shows ranger working as 5 days and not 7. Have the pavilions had electrical and legionella safety checks?
Maintenance of equipment, buildings & landscape	Good way forward on maintenance of buildings and Landscape.	Provide evidence from public consultation to relocate playground and indicate where funding is being made available. Engage Members of Public young and old. Look at external sources of funding / match funding.

Litter, cleanliness, vandalism	Little evidence of Graffiti, litter or dog mess.	Maybe consider recycle waste bins for plastic/glass/paper.
Environmental Sustainability	Good practices on the ground	Provide more information on the BAP as evidence comes to light from surveys. Try and involve more members of public and local schools. Please include details of energy audit works phase 2 as identified in 2011 action plan. Please include details of annual planting programme and findings of the review of wildlife planting.
Conservation of heritage & nature	Actions for 2011 address a number of the shortfalls in this area.	Need to make a feature of the sheep – dip together with interpretation board. Look forward to seeing the new Wildlife Conservation Plan
Community Involvement	Good to meet local councillor.	Consider leasing pavilions to local clubs that hire at present. They could unlock external funding to enhance these facilities for future. Consider more engagement with local community on Rothampsted Park Management Cttee including chairmanship to give sense of ownership.
Marketing Strategy	Good range of publicity material in line with Councils communications strategy	Need to include more photos of events in use by members of the public especially carnival and the highland games event
Overall management	The management of this site continues to improve.	Follow action plans. Need to consider new actions for the park to ensure continued progress.

Additional comments

Management have taken on board the recommendations of the judges from last year and incorporated into the plan and work program.

Field Assessment Feedback

Band score 50 - 54

Criteria	Strengths	Recommendations
A Welcoming Place	Good progress has been made on entrance beside leisure centre which previously was a bare muddy track and now provides a more welcoming entrance.	Directional Signage is required from the Town Centre and more importantly given spend cuts from adjacent roads e.g. top of road has logo sign for leisure centre but no mention of the park.
Healthy, Safe and Secure	CCTV Monitoring of site and overlooking leisure centre is good for perception of safety in this park Good links with Sports Centre Manager and Sports & play officer	Continue to monitor the 2 new BBQ areas and any further sites if expanded as suggested. May need to re-evaluate fire risk assessment for adjacent fields given activity takes place during summer.
Clean and Well Maintained	Generally free of human litter and dog faeces. Grounds in tidy, well ordered condition and trees in good order. Skate park was free of graffiti	How has the trial pooper scooper dispenser worked out - will it continue?
Sustainability	The contractor uses high technology weed spraying buggies. Areas of grass mowing left taller requiring less frequent mowing Permissive cycle route through the park	Set a target of a % reduction for each year. What are the results from the trial cycle route and how will these influence continuation of project?
Conservation and Heritage	The HBAP will lead to incremental improvements	Consider if an interpretation board needs to be placed near the old sheep dip as this largely redundant practice will not be known by future generations of people
Community Involvement	Responds to community need and active co-operation with the town council	Consider opening up the pavilion for community use.
Marketing	Notice boards and website up to date.	None.
Management	Well Managed Park.	Continue obtaining visitor feedback and feed this back into 2011/12 action plan.

Additional Comments

A very attractive and well used park. All the recommendations from the previous judges have been incorporated or answered.

This also shows the commitment of senior Management and Councilors that St. Albans have fully adopted the Green Flag and wish to do well.

