

Girton Parish Council

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The Pavilion
Girton Recreation Ground
Cambridge Road, Girton
Cambridge CB3 0FH

Minutes of the Environment Committee meeting held at Cotton Hall on 8th December 2008 at 7.35pm

Present: Cllrs Ford-Smith (Chairman), Gordon (Vice Chairman), Martin, Clift (Vice Chairman of Parish Council), and co-opted Cllrs Seaber, and George Thorpe (from Item 08/94) Action
In attendance: Robert Stone (Clerk)

Items

08/92 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Hodgkinson

08/93 Members' declarations of interest for items on the agenda

None.

08/94 That Standing Orders be suspended for an Open Session for the public

Proposed: Cllr Ford-Smith; seconded Cllr Martin

Mrs Mette Vognasen & Mrs Annie Van Heerden outlined to Committee Members the problems they had been experiencing turning into or out of their properties because of inconsiderate car parking around the Willow Tree island adjacent to Woody Green/Duck End. Cllr Clift said that the issue would be looked at to see what could be done to alleviate the movement of cars within the immediate area.

08/95 That Standing Orders be reinstated and the Committee meeting resumed

Proposed: Cllr Ford-Smith; seconded Cllr Martin. The meeting resumed.

08/96 That the minutes of the Environment Committee meeting held on 3 November 2008 be signed by the Chairman as an accurate record.

Proposed Cllr Ford-Smith; seconded Cllr Gordon. Unanimous. Signed.

08/97 Matters arising from minutes

Items:

08/87 (i) The Clerk advised that the Council did not have powers to place a bench on Girton Town Council land at Wellbrook Way.

08/87 (ii), (iii) & (iv) No document had been traced identifying whether Wimpeys, SCDC, or the Parish Council was currently responsible for maintenance of the public spaces at Wellbrook Way including cutting the grass, replacing dead trees, or hedge cutting. However, SCDC had adopted the waste bins and arrangements had been made to empty these.

08/87 (v) Discussions were ongoing with the County Council regarding painting the words "bus stop" on Huntingdon Road some distance from Girton Corner to improve the safety of cyclists.

08/87 (vii) Weavers Field Play Area – the replacement gate latch, and repair to ariss rails

on the fence would be taken forward under S&R budgets.

08/91 (iv) Repair to Mayfield Road bus shelter – Cllr Gordon advised that this was being progressed. This may have to go the Parish Council for financial approval.

08/98 To progress a black squirrel logo for Girton Parish Council by:

selecting a suitable image to promote the works of the Council; identifying a number of artists; and agreeing a selection procedure & timetable to submit to the PC for approval.

Several images of black squirrels were circulated. Cllr Martin had designed a silhouette; Cllr Ford-Smith tabled the picture that had been originally discussed; and the Clerk had printed a number of pictures taken from articles. It was agreed to produce a logo this financial year. The next step was to obtain side view sketches from artists to be approved or otherwise at the January meeting. Cllr Gordon said he would approach Anne Bonnett for an initial black sketch on a white background, and request an indication of costs should the final logo be commissioned. The Clerk would make a parallel approach to another graphic artist, and ask Girton Glebe School if they would like to arrange a competition.

Cllr Gordon

Clerk

08/99 To consider the parking issues arising at Woody Green/Duck End, and what actions (if any) can be recommended to the Parish Council.

Further to the earlier discussion (Item 08/94 above) Cllr Clift advised that if the problems were matters for the Highways Authority, Cambridgeshire CC would need to be approached. If the issue was one of obstruction the police could assist. The sides of the island had already been raised but it may be possible to introduce planters close to the edge of the island if drivers were still driving over the sides. Road markings were another possibility that would be looked at during the site visit. Mr Seaber mentioned that cutting back the hedges may provide more road space.

Cllr Clift

08/100 To consider the Parish Path Partnership application to Cambridgeshire County Council for 2009/10.

The Clerk advised that time was in hand to carefully consider our requirements as Cambridgeshire CC did not require a response until early February 2009. The Committee decided to refer the issue to Cllr Peter Starling for advice at the next meeting in January.

Cllr P Starling

08/101 To consider Hayden's Tree Survey for Girton Parish Council sites, and schedule of recommended works.

Whilst a number of recommendations had been made the amount of work required over the next few years was relatively small. Some trees, particularly horse chestnuts, would require felling, and some new inter planting was required.

Advice was needed from the Tree Wardens to take the survey forward. Decisions would need to be taken at the next meeting. What was required was an action plan covering the recommended works by year.

Colin Carr
George Thorp

It was agreed that one copy of the report would be circulated to members who had not had an opportunity to view it, and the other held in the Parish Office as a reference copy.

It was noted that the trees in Washpit Lane were not included in the report. Neither were any trees in the roadside verges elsewhere in the village. These were presumed to be the responsibility of the Highways Authority, but this needed to be confirmed.

Clerk

08/102 To receive the report on Town End Close, and approve the recommendation to form a small group to plan and oversee any works.

Cllr Clift referred to his report at Appendix 1. He apologized for not having consulted with

others, particularly with George Thorpe whose role as Warden of the site had not been drawn to his attention. The need for quick action had stemmed from Natural England's correspondence offering grant monies for works. Unfortunately by the time he became aware of this possibility he had to move fast to meet NE's deadline of 15th November.

If Girton PC was successful in its bid a grant of approximately £3000 would be received. Initial estimates of costs based on discussion with a local contractor were £2,240 plus £1500 for installing water totaling £3,740. We needed to await the outcome of our NE bid before taking the project forward as a whole.

However, there was need to progress the grass cutting when dry, and hedge cutting. Both needed to be done before the end of February.

The Chairman added that we needed to consider putting up notice boards advising members of the public that they entered at their own risk when livestock was present. The insurance position also needed to be checked. Town End Close needed to be an agenda item at the next meeting on 12th January 2009.

Clerk

08/103 To consider the three quotations for the cutting the grass verges in Girton in 2009, and which to recommend to the Parish Council.

- i) Jand P Plant Ltd £200 per cut for 8 cuts; ii) Paul Laston Garden Services £5600 for 7 cuts; and iii) Grounds by Rounds £300 + vat (rate per cut for 8 cuts)

It was agreed to recommend the quote from J and P Plant Ltd to the next meeting on the Parish Council on a trial basis of one year, and subject to monitoring the timing and standard of the cutting of the grass verges from March to October 2009.

08/104 To receive reports:

1. From the Chairman on site meetings with architects to discuss a new frontage to the Recreation Ground.

The Chairman reported that he had met with Tim Brading and Nick Twitchett who had differed in their approach. Tim's view was that there should be uniform design in the approaches to Smithy Green, the Hibbert Ware Garden, and the frontage to the car park. Nick's focus was more on the enhancement to the entrance to the car park.

The Clerk advised that he had identified a third local architect to approach for a quote for the redesign of the frontage of the Recreation Ground Car Park. He would aim to arrange a site meeting with the Chairman prior to the next committee meeting to permit the matter to go forward to the Parish Council.

Clerk

2. From the Recreation Ground Working Group. No report received.
3. Open spaces - A quotation had been received from Acacia for tree works on Smithy Green but this did not cover what was required. A further quote would need to be obtained with the assistance of the Tree Warden.
4. Street furniture. No report received.
5. Tree Warden. No report received.
6. Girton Wood - Three new benches were now in place, and bridge works had been done.

Colin Carr

The meeting closed at 9.27pm.

Town End Close, Girton

Report for Environment Committee meeting of 8th December 2008

- 1) Prior to the 21st September 2008 I had made a number of tentative enquiries concerning the placement of a water trough and water connection in the field known as Town End Close at Woody Green, Girton. I was informed that the approximate cost of doing this would be between £1200 and £1500.
- 2) A letter from Natural England dated 21st September 2008 was received at the Parish Office. The letter indicated that there was likely to be additional funding available to Agreement Holders but that the attached amendment form should be completed and returned to Natural England by the 15th November 2008.
- 3) It was not until the end of October that I became aware of this letter and was able to make a number of telephone enquiries concerning a possible claim for works to be carried out.
- 4) It was necessary to move quickly in an effort to find out what needed doing and to make the necessary claim for monies. I therefore spoke with Mr Jones the manager of University Farm who stated that he would be prepared to graze young cattle in that field to fulfil our obligations to graze it. The manager told me that he was not happy with the state of the fences and that work would have to be carried on them before any animals could be safely put into that field. He pointed out that he would be under no obligation to graze animals in that field and should it transpire that the animals escaped or were harassed then he would withdraw them. He also stated that he would not expect to pay anything toward the cost of funding or renting this area as he had plenty of grazing land of his own. He did state that he would provide a drinking trough and ball tap for the field but not fund the actual connection.
- 5) Around the 3rd of November I made contact with Natural England and later that week, with Douglas De Lacey, met Frances Prince on site to get a picture from her of what Natural England would expect of us in return for any monies that might be forthcoming. As a result of this meeting I received an email from her which in summary said that, it would be feasible to consider applying for additional funding for:
 - Hedgerow restoration (380m)
 - Fencing - lengths as required
 - Minor tree surgery
 - Water trough and water supply
 - Bird boxes
- 6) It was necessary to arrange another meeting with the Manager of University Farms to access what work he considered necessary to make the field escape proof for his animals. He suggested that a wooden posted, four stranded barbed wire fence would be adequate. Natural England, however, were unhappy with barbed wire in view of the public access to the field or with an electric strand on that fence. Both Natural England and the manager of University Farm will accept four strand smooth wire.
- 7) Bearing in mind the use of smooth wire, it is possible that animals would lean on a fence of this type and move or strain it and regular maintenance may be necessary. In this case I would suggest that a fence of this type be built round the field but on the inside of the present fence. The wooded area near to Woody Green appears to have a walk way under the trees/bushes and the fence in that area should be under those trees. The old fence here

- is in a very poor condition but would act as a second deterrent to animal's intent on escape. By placing the wire strand fence next to the present fences I consider that animals would be less likely to force through it and eventually bushes and scrub would grow to the new fence providing another deterrent. *(Natural England have not approved the poisoning of the fence as described)*
- 8) Natural England want the hedges cut back by approximately 2 metres and this work should be done before February 2009.
 - 9) Having placed a fence and cut back the hedges as suggested it is my opinion that the new fence would then be a marker for us when cutting back the hedges in future.
 - 10) The Ridge and Furrows present in the field are important features and should be protected. (No use of heavy machinery)
 - 11) There are a large number of thistles present in the field which animals will not graze so it will be necessary to cut the grass on a regular basis to eventually get rid of those thistles. The grass needs cutting now but I suggest that it is cut early next year so that when the young stronger grass shoots in spring, it will more easily force through any cut grass left on the surface.
 - 12) I suggest, therefore, that it is necessary to restore 380 metres of Hedgerow, including bushes in the middle of the field, build about that same amount of fencing, carry out the minor tree surgery, fit a water trough and water supply and accept a number of bird boxes to be erected around the field.
 - 13) In my opinion the small pond and spinney should be fenced off and access to these areas be allowed by stile or gate. (No request has been made to Natural England for such a gate or Stile and they have not approved this suggestion.)
 - 14) To date I do not know whether or not we will receive any money from Natural England but inform you that an application has been made to them and should we get the full amount asked for it would be in the region of £3000 but could be much less.
 - 15) Four letters have been sent out for quotes for this work so that we will have an idea of its cost. When we know the incoming figure and the necessary outgoing figure then we will be able to decide a fairly accurate figure to be injected from our funds.
(At a meeting I had with one of the companies on site a figure of £125 to cut the grass and £650 to trim the hedges was suggested but no price for the fencing could be given at that time.)
 - 16) Clearly all these matters should be put before the Environment Committee for decision and it might be prudent for members of the committee to visit the area before the next meeting so that they are fully aware of the situation on site.
 - 17) I feel that it is now necessary to form a small group to plan and oversee any works the committee may deem necessary to carry out at Town End Close and to that end I have spoken with a small number of people but received no assurances of help. I also spoke to George Thorpe the warden of Town End and was saddened by his prompt resignation from his position as warden on the grounds that he is not being consulted enough on matters concerning it. He did however state that he would be willing to remain as part of any group that may be formed.
 - 18) Town End Close in my opinion could become an asset to the village and compare with the walk ways and wooded area adjacent to our recreation field. It could be a small haven for animal and plant life and if properly managed a very pleasant place to spend some time. Grazing is important to encourage wild plants and keep the grass reasonably short.
 - 19) No decisions have yet been made concerning any of the work and all enquiries carried out have merely been a fact finding exercise to assist the committee in making any decisions. I apologise that I have not consulted with members of the committee with regard to these enquiries but urgent action was necessary to complete the forms and secure any

- additional money that may be on offer. It was also necessary to meet the various people at short notice and when they were available.
- 20) I am sure that alternative suggestions would be welcome but it should be remembered that these works should be carried out before the end of February 2009.

Sam Clift
1st December 2008