



Minutes of Friends of Pittville Executive Committee Meeting – 9 September 2009

Note abbreviations used in the minutes: FOP = Friends of Pittville; PARA = Pittville Area Residents' Association; CBC = Cheltenham Borough Council

1 Members present

Hon Chairman Dave Prince (DP)
Hon Secretary Fiona Clarke (FC)
Hon Treasurer Paul Weston (PW)
Ward Cllr. Tim Cooper (TC)
Colin Eynon (CE)
Park Watch - Desmond Fitzgerald (DF)
Ward Cllr. Diane Hibbert (DH)
Ron Pattinson (RP)
Anne Roberts (AR)

Rob Bell (CBC)
Rosemary Mansbridge (CBC)

1.1 Apologies

Judy Langhorn (JL)

1.2 Absent

Daud McDonald (DM)

2 Minutes of Executive Committee (ExComm) Meeting – 4 August 2009

The minutes were agreed. Although not noted at the meeting, there was one correction. The previous Hon. Chairman had notified the Hon. Secretary that, although he had spoken to senior officers at UCAS and Cheltenham Racecourse, they had not got as far as discussing sponsorship.

3 Matters arising

- 3.1 The bridge:** Rosemary Mansbridge (RM) gave a detailed description of the engineering elements of the bridge. She reported that three companies had been invited to tender for constructing it. The chosen one is Clarke Nicholls and Marcel Ltd. Progress is good. However, the original August date for submitting the planning application had proved optimistic. The plans will now be submitted on 24 September 2009. There will be eight weeks for public consultation before the planning committee meets on 19 November. The Environment Agency, English Heritage and CBC staff had provided a lot of help and advice, which led to the design we were about to view at this meeting.

However, this was only an initial sketch and a full set of detailed designs was required on 24 September. RM had only been advised of this requirement ten days ago, so there was not much time to come up with a final design. The decorations, which are designed by Christopher Lisney, are to be three dimensional, sitting proud of the railings, on the outside of the bridge, within the height of the handrail. They are based on the drawings made by children at two local schools, depicting what Pittville Park meant to them.

The ExComm members were invited to make comments and ask questions. The following information was obtained: the handrails will be 1100 mm high; the concrete supports from the old bridge will go

after the bridge is finished; the decking is not wood but concrete, poured into trays which form the curve of the bridge; the handrails are set into the concrete; there will be two bollards at each end of the bridge to prevent cars and quad bikes being driven onto it; there could be signs saying 'no quad bikes'; the bollards must be wide enough apart to allow prams and pushchairs and disabled scooters through; lighting columns will be provided when funds allow (the foundations will be made for these now); CBC will try to have night-watchmen present during construction because last time this was when some damage took place; the contractor will be told about potential problems; the bridge with decoration should take only a few days to erect as it is prefabricated; the decoration will be hot dipped galvanised steel; patination will give a weathered appearance; the concrete will be grey but finished with a tarmac finish which will match the existing paths.

Some ExComm members thought the design looked a little thin and the various items did not hang together; they looked stuck on, almost at random. Also some thought that black tarmac to match the existing paths was not attractive. RM admitted that she and her colleagues were a little disappointed at the decoration designs. There will be a meeting with Christopher Lisney tomorrow to sort out the issues.

There are no electronic versions of the bridge design or the decorations yet for FOP to put on its web site. These will be provided after 24 September.

RB then set out all the issues (financial and artistic) relating to this project; it is proving very complex. The aesthetics are very important, but everything is tied up in the financial limitations. For example, what costings were done for the art work; how will it be manufactured; it will not be cheap; we need to make the bridge look less busy.

The Chairman (DP) responded by saying money must be spent on the art work; it cannot look cheap. It has to look good and has to last.

RM said it is a community bridge; CBC does have to incorporate the designs of the two primary schools; in fact she wants more decoration, not less.

Further discussions covered the following points: AR liked the designs but had thought the decoration would be on panels; are they more expensive than the proposed option? Others asked could there be a camera on the bridge to discourage vandalism etc.; graffiti is a bigger problem and the bridge must be graffiti-proof; could the skateboard park be moved to near the sports centre which might reduce the vandalism; others thought that is too far for the children to go.

The Chairman brought the discussion back to the bridge itself – when will CBC come back to FOP with the final design? The money has to be spent this financial year (Severn Trent money) so the 24 September deadline for submission must be met.

ACTION: RB promised that CBC would invite FOP to a short meeting before 24 September so that we could see what was being submitted to planning. He also promised that someone would attend the AGM in October, with illustrations.

3.2 Responses from Rob Bell (CBC) to the other matters raised in FOP letter to him, dated 12 August

RB said he had sent the FOP Secretary a short **written statement on the HLF bid** for inclusion in the next newsletter. (Refer Minutes 4 August 2009, Para 4.3) He said everyone had been very disappointed at the failure of the bid. It would be reported on at the full Council meeting on 12 October 2009, at which time recommendations would be made on future funding for Pittville Park. This report will be made public.

He suggested that the monthly meeting which is held between CBC and FOP could be widened to include discussion of **funding opportunities**, though he pointed out that there were a lot of Friends groups and servicing them all was a huge drain on their resources. (Refer Minutes 4 August Para 4.1 and 6.2)

He added that it was very difficult to obtain **sponsorship** at the moment. Also there were planning and conservation issues- most sponsors wanted a sign to acknowledge their contribution. Bath and Windsor,

which are historic towns, have such signs; why not Cheltenham? Discussions have begun about refurbishing Pittville Gates and the possibility of getting some sponsorship from local businesses. FOP might be more successful than CBC in obtaining this sponsorship. (Refer Minutes 4 August Para 4.1 and 6.2)

RB then said that there are no definite plans at the moment for **Central Cross Cafe**. CBC is considering various options for outsourcing the catering (refer Minutes 4 August Para 4.2). Weather conditions make it hard for CBC to run the service and they rely on agency staff. This is expensive. DH said that FOP would be a good forum to explore the options, especially in winning favour from the local community. This must be before, not after, a decision has been made. RB said it will be open to competition; not necessarily tendering, but expressions of interest. FOP could help. The objective is to improve the service for the customer. Being in a residential area must be taken into consideration. We could get feedback through the FOP web-site.

Further discussion covered the following points: CE asked if the cafe was in the right position; AR reiterated a point she had made in previous meetings – that a kiosk or something is needed in the children's play area, but the Central Cross Cafe must be kept where it is, possibly incorporating a visitors centre and with food and drink. RP thought that people do not come just for the cafe. DH asked if there really was no scope for something in the Pump Room. At the recent Bands in the Park concert she attended, at least 300 people were there and not a single thing on sale to eat or drink. It is inconceivable that nothing can be done; it just needs a little thought and imagination. It must be considered for 2010. CE said he'd been somewhere a few weeks ago at an open air band performance where there were two kiosks offering coffee and tea, and icecreams. The Chairman thought that if conservation and heritage issues were the obstacle, we would like to know what they are.

ACTION: the CBC Heritage officer should be invited to FOP meeting after the AGM; FC to arrange.

RB and RM left the meeting at this point.

4 Annual General Meeting

DH reported that 28 October was not possible because it was half-term and there would be no caretaker available to open the building. Alternative dates were 20 and 21 October.

ACTION: DH to check again with Dunalley School and to inform FC so that the printed newsletter could be finalised.

Refreshments (tea, coffee, biscuits) will be served after the meeting. Dunalley School has the facilities and equipment to do this.

ACTION: FC agreed to purchase the refreshments. AR agreed to help serve tea etc. and FC volunteered her husband too.

Friends must be informed in advance of changes to the Constitution, at least three weeks before the AGM.

ACTION: FC to prepare a statement of the changes which will be e-mailed and posted/delivered to the members with the notice about the AGM. The newsletter will note also that there are changes (and a printed version of these will be provided at the AGM).

The AGM could be publicised through an article in the 'Gloucestershire Echo', noting that there are also vacancies on the ExComm.

ACTION: FC to contact Gloucestershire Echo (Aled Thomas).

Apologies in advance: Colin Eynon

DH said that we needed to be clear on the process for running the meeting and electing the ExComm. We checked the Constitution which says 'all the members of the executive committee shall retire from office together at the end of the next annual general meeting after the date on which they came into

office, although they may be re-elected or re-appointed' (Refer Clause G (3)) . The Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary said they were all willing to stand for election for another year.

Friends will be able to renew their membership for 2010 at the meeting.

ACTION: DF agreed to help the Treasurer collect memberships at the door.

DP noted that we needed more ExComm members and this should be emphasised.

ACTION: FC to ensure this is included in the notice to members about the AGM, and in the newsletter and the Glos Echo item.

The agenda has to be finalised.

ACTION: DP and FC to discuss and draw up agenda (items other than the financial statement and election which could be included are the bridge, volunteering (see Para 5 below), the kiosk, Pittville Gates).

5 AOB

Other action required after the ExComm meeting on 4 August 2009

PW reported that it was not easy to become a **charity** and that the Charity Commissioners were not interested in registering an organisation with an income of less than £5000. So, for the time being, it would not be appropriate for FOP to seek charitable status. (Refer Minutes 4 August Para 6.2). He noted that there had been only one new member since March 2009 and that no-one had joined since the demise of PARA.

FC reported on her meeting with John Rees, (Landscape Services Manager CBC) on 7 September. He was very interested in FOP members being **volunteers** in the park and outlined several areas where we could work with CBC staff. She said he was willing to have a Ranger address the AGM about volunteering.

ACTION: FC to send notes of the meeting to ExComm members.

CE wanted further clarification on the role of FOP now that the HLF bid has failed. He wondered if FOP had a planning role and should comment on issues such as parking and litter at race meetings etc. DH said that dealing with these types of issues is what the ward councillors are for. It was agreed that FOP should show leadership in ensuring that the best interests of the park are maintained, but we are not representing the community as such. We do not have a FOP view on matters relating to the park and Pittville, although individuals might wish to take up particular causes.

FC wanted clarification on the group which meets CBC on a monthly basis. DH said this was a sub-group of FOP, which has a monthly walkabout in the park and other green spaces, then meets the following week to discuss it and other matters.

ACTION: the sub-group should report back formally to the ExComm either each month or at the next ExComm meeting. DH agreed to ensure this.

6 Date of next meeting

This will be confirmed later. It was agreed that we should invite the heritage officer, Karen Radford, to the ExComm meeting following the AGM and to agree dates with her. Proposed dates are 11 or 18 November. She will be asked to tell us what is acceptable, from her point of view, for changes in Pittville Park and other green spaces, including any developments around Central Cross Cafe.

ACTION: FC to invite her and to advise DH of the date so she can book the room.