



Minutes of Friends of Pittville Executive Committee Meeting – 16 February 2010

1 Members present

Hon Chairman Judy Langhorn (JL)
Hon Secretary Fiona Clarke (FC)
Anne Roberts (AR)
Ward Cllr Diane Hibbert (DH)
Ward Cllr Tim Cooper (TC)

1.1 Apologies

Hon Treasurer Paul Weston
Park Watch Representative Desmond Fitzgerald
Colin Eynon

1.2 Others present

Karen Radford, CBC Heritage and Conservation Manager (KR) and Wilf Tomaney, CBC Urban Design Manager (WT) – from 6.30 to 7.30pm
Judie Hodsdon – prospective ExComm member

2 Pittville Park's gates

Karen Radford and Wilf Tomaney had been invited to address the meeting about the gates in Pittville Park, in particular the Pittville Gates at the end of Winchcombe Street and the east and west gates to the Pump Room. They had been asked to outline the history and status of the various gates; describe what investigations had taken place to date into their condition; any proposals for restoration or replacement; costing; sources of funding for work, and expected timescale to complete any project.

KR distributed five items:

- 1 *Pittville Park: a stone condition survey and report for CBC, Part 6, Pittville Gates, August 2008*
- 2 *Condition survey in reference to railings and gates, Pittville Park, Cheltenham, Section on Pittville Gates, August 2008*
- 3 *Gates & railings for Pittville Pump Room, Cheltenham, by Jeremy Jefferies, 2006*
- 4 Drawings of the above gates, 2007
- 5 Letter, quoting for the above gates, from A.P. & P.C.Carpenter, dated 25 January 2010.

KR explained that items 1 and 2 had been prepared for the Heritage Lottery Fund bid. They state that the gate piers for Pittville Gates needed replacing completely with new piers at a cost, at that time, of £60,000. The metal gates themselves required a combination of repair and replacement, at a cost at the time of £50,000.

The gates are grade 2 listed structures and as such require listed building consent. There was some discussion as to whether VAT would be charged on any or all of the required work. This depended on, e.g. whether or not the work was replacement or repair, who commissioned the work. This discussion was inconclusive and needed investigation at a later stage.

It was thought that to be VAT exempt, and indeed, to be eligible to apply for funding from some sources, Friends of Pittville would need to be registered as a charity.

There was discussion as to sources of funding. These included Civic Pride; Gloucestershire Highways, CBC funds subject to disposal of assets (as mentioned by Cabinet Member for Community Development and Finance, John Webster at Council Budget meeting on 12 February; private charities such as the Summerfield Trust; The Big Lottery Fund; ENTRUST; Gloucestershire Trust for Nature Conservation.

KR said she had a list of such sources which she would provide

Action: FC to obtain

KR went on to explain items 3, 4 and 5. Planning permission had been obtained to replace the existing gates and railings (which were not in the original plans for the Pittville Estate and Pump Room). The report had recommended making new railings and gates consistent with others designed in the 1830s and 40s, when the first houses were built on West Approach Drive.

It was not clear whether the costing was for one or both sets of railings and gates. KR will double check.

Action: FC to obtain the information.

DH remembered that the impetus for this report was that someone had left money (£5000) to Cheltenham to replace the railings and gates. It was thought that Mr Peter Simmons (ex-PARA) might know what had happened to the money.

Action: FC to check

JL noted that the plans were for black gates and railings. It was not known why most of Cheltenham's parks' railings and gates are green; black came into vogue after the death of Prince Albert in 1861. Nor was it known if Joseph Pitt specified certain colours for the parks and squares

Action: FC to research in due

course

KR said she would prefer that FOP took on Pittville Gates as a project because they are historic and are in very poor condition. JL asked what had happened to the horse trough which was in the old photograph on the report. It was not known what had happened to it; perhaps it was now in the Promenade? JL also asked about the BT phone box being removed. Apparently there are plans to remove some phone boxes. The whole area needs to be improved. WT said that the existing concrete slabs etc, could be replaced by self-binding gravel which would be much more attractive.

TC asked about Section 106 money. WT said it would depend on how we presented the case.

FC asked what the process would be, and how long it might take to get a project up and running, and completed.

KR said that the starting point was having money up front to obtain a specification of works for the stone and metal work; then going to tender (3 weeks); then obtaining listed building consent (8 weeks). Parallel to this would be fundraising. It would be advisable to fit into funding bodies' schedules. It might take a year to all the paperwork. Then the stonemason and ironwork firms need to obtain the materials before commencing work.

KR added that, by chance, she had met someone from HLF while the Pittville Park bid was being considered. She had been told that the bid was good, but not to be too hopeful. It was also likely that the two current HLF bids from Cheltenham could still affect our outcome, should we apply again to HLF.

Karen and Wilf left the meeting at this point.

There was more discussion about section 106 money and whether FOP would be eligible. DH noted that if we were to take on Pittville Gates we would be seen as serious about the park; we need to get key CBC officers to buy into it and support us. TC said he would be able to approach organisations such as Cheltenham Racecourse, UCAS, and GE for funding. JL noted that businesses in Prestbury Road were also keen to contribute something, however small. TC thought that CBC should manage the technical aspects of the project.

It was agreed that the other members of the Executive Committee should be given the documentation and a decision made about taking this project on when we look at the other proposals for the year (item 7 refers as well).

Action: FC to pass papers on

3 Minutes of Executive Committee (ExComm) meeting – 8 January 2010

The minutes of the previous Committee Meeting were unanimously approved as being a true record of the meeting. Action had been taken on item 2 (actions 2 and 3) and 6.2 was on the agenda this evening.

4 Matters arising (Previous minutes' reference)

4.1 The Community Bridge – FC confirmed that the press release about the bridge which she and JL had been given when they met Rosemary Mansbridge and Adam Reynolds (at the latter's request) on Monday 8 February had been published in the Gloucestershire Echo (though there was no website item).

She had sent an e-mail to members about the drilling rig the same day. She informed ExComm members that CBC's funding application to the Gloucestershire Environmental Trust had been unsuccessful, so funding for the outstanding £35,000 had been found within CBC 2009/10 and 2010/11 budgets. The ironworker Christopher Lisney had started work on some of the decorative items but, because he was also exhibiting at the Chelsea Flower Show in May, he would be unavailable 15 March until 31 May.

Invitations to tender for the bridge and related work would be issued in early March; it was hoped that work would start by 1 May, with the onsite build from 12 July and completion by mid-August. However, it was expected that this time scale should slip. Unfortunately building in the summer will affect Boathouse and boating lake activities and revenue, so construction may be delayed until after the summer season.

Members of the ExComm were not impressed by any of this news.

FC went on to mention the CBC's application to the Ibstock Cory Environmental Trust for funding for improvements to water quality and biodiversity in the lower lake, which would complement the bridge itself. She had already sent the Application form completed by CBC to ExComm members and had asked them to write a letter of support, if indeed they agreed with the content. They had agreed that FC should write a letter of support on behalf of FOP as requested by RM. (RM has written to thank her for that)

Members of the ExComm were in general supportive, though some had expressed concerns about loss of wildlife habitat and possible depletion of fish stocks.

RM and AR has also updated FC and JL on several ongoing projects: six new fishing platforms will be constructed in early March (funded by Severn Trent); construction of Pathfinder funded adventure playground equipment in the south side of the Lower Lake will start next week; and Severn Trent flood recovery money will fund MUGA (multi-use games area) near the leisure centre; work will commence in early March.

4.2 Central Cross Cafe - JL reminded ExComm members she had written a letter to CBC's project manager Mark Woodward following her and FC's participation in their focus group on parks' catering and recreation facilities in Pittville and Montpellier parks, on 28 January. She had written because there was a majority from Montpellier and she felt that the views of FOP ExComm members had not been fully represented. FC had written a summary of the meeting for ExComm members as well.

JL and FC commented that the thrust of the focus group had been outsourcing the facilities. TC, who had also been there, said that CBC had consulted eleven other local authorities, all of whom outsourced. But they also did not recommend using large national companies because standards ultimately dropped.

The report with recommendations was expected in the summer.

4.3 Waitrose Charity Scheme – DF had written to say that the scheme was devoted to 'charity type causes' and that FOP did not come into this category. It was agreed not to pursue this any further.

4.4 Membership update – JL, who is still Membership Secretary, reported that there are now 98 paid up members for 2010. There were many renewals which is quite encouraging. 227 memberships have been issued altogether; of that number 33 have not paid since 2007. It was agreed to remove these people from the mailing lists.

4.5 Friends of Pittville and planning applications – DF had raised this at the last meeting but was unable to attend this evening. Although he had written a short statement in support of FOP becoming involved with planning applications, it was decided to leave the debate until the next meeting.

5 CBC Budget 2010/11

DH reported that, at the CBC'S Council Budget meeting on 12 February, it was stated that Pittville Park would get £25,000 each year for the next two years. Also, that if any council assets were disposed of, Pittville Park might get some more money for specific projects. There is often an under spend toward the end of the year. If FOP were to suggest a significant improvement we might obtain some funding for it. Having the £300,000 would have provided that input, had it been still available.

JH asked if there was strategy for Pittville Park. DH said there was not a specific one, but it came under the Green Spaces Strategy

http://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=612&pageNumber=1

TC remarked that if there were, and we had a schedule of CBC's activity for the year, we would know what they were planning and be able to have an input. **Action: FC will check with relevant officers, Rob Bell and John Rees**

6 Meeting with Benjamin Bowen, owner of Hotel on the Park, Evesham Road

JL and FC had arranged to meet Mr Bowen as representatives of FOP on 23 January. He had outlined his ideas for managing Central Cross Cafe and had asked for FOP support in his negotiations with CBC. We said we would need to debate this with ExComm members.

The following points came up in discussion: it was not FOP's role to support one candidate over another; Hotel on the Park did not want to make a profit on running the cafe, but to provide another facility for its customers; FOP should be invited by CBC to take part in the tender exercise; we need to be sure that the type of facility is right for the public who use the park now.

It was agreed that it was not yet the right time for Mr Bowen to put his case to FOP. This would be more appropriate after the report and recommendations in the summer.

Mr Bowen also offered to sponsor the printed newsletter, perhaps sponsoring an ExComm meeting or an event, and co-operating on Cheltenham in Bloom. It was agreed to accept his kind offer to sponsor the newsletter for up to a year. This amounted to about £300.

FC reported that she had contacted the chairman of Cheltenham in Bloom, Cllr Chris Ryder, who had invited FOP to send a representative to the next meeting on 8 March, during which they would decide whether to participate in the Heart of England In Bloom 2010

<http://www.heartofenglandinbloom.co.uk/index.php?page=1>

DH said that Pittville had been invited in the past, but no-one was available to provide the follow up to the planting etc., e.g. watering. FC said this could be done now, with the volunteer working party. It was agreed that Judie Hodsdon and probably Anne Roberts would attend, if two were allowed. **Action: FC to check and advise JH and AR.**

7 Projects, meetings and events programme

7.1 Members' picnic – JL outlined her idea of a members' picnic in the spring. This could have coincided with the opening of the community bridge, had it taken place at Easter, as originally planned. Now, because of other commitments, she and FC were not available until June. Members would bring their own chairs and blankets, food and drink. There could be some fun activities suitable for adults. Some thought that the picnic should be open to guests (in the hope that they might become members) and that it should be advertised in the printed newsletter and on the web site, again to encourage new members.

7.2 Postcard and photos evening – FC suggested this because, as secretary, she had received several enquiries from people who wanted pictures and other information about their properties. It is possible among the membership that there will be old photos etc. Her husband has also collected many old postcards through e-Bay etc. These could be displayed. This event could be held in a local pub in the autumn and include some activity, e.g. guess what this picture is? CS said we could possibly use Pittville School, and why not turn it into a fundraising evening?

7.3 Plan of work for Pittville Park– TC wants CBC to provide a planting and maintenance programme so that FOP can 'hold them to account and ensure that planned work is carried out on time and to an acceptable standard' with a view to 'driving the agenda for improvements and begin to formulate a strategy. FOP could then add in its wish list and start to seek external funding for the various initiatives'.

7.4 CBC initiatives - there was further discussion about other CBC initiatives that we had learned about, mostly by chance. It was simply not good enough that we were not made aware of events, constructions, e.g. the adventure playground, even the Ibstock Cory application for the water quality and biodiversity project well in advance. If we had it, we could publicise the events on our website. It might also be a good idea for FOP to have a Face book presence. Do we have a link off the CBC website? **Action: FC to check again with CBC on an events list, website links, and investigate Facebook**

7.5 Funding – on funding, we need to come up with a list of projects and decide on a top five. With this we would be in a much stronger position to apply for funding. Applications might have to come from a registered charity. The Treasurer had investigated this a while ago and had learned that we needed to have assets of £3000 to register. Some thought this was not the case. If we had to reach £3000 our priority should be raising that amount as soon as possible. **Action: JL to check again and FC to initiate an e-mail discussion among the ExComm for additional ideas for projects.**

8 FOP/CBC park ‘walkabout’

FC reported that she’d gone on the park ‘walkabout’ on 29 January with CBC’s John Rees and ex-PARA representative Peter Simmons. We had walked from the Pump Room, down Albert Road to Pittville Circus where damage to the verge on the south side was inspected. The contractor agreed to put right the damage to the grass. From there we walked along Wellington Road, along the east side of Wellington Square, into the park and turned left around the lower lake, back through the underpass and up to the Pump Room. This took about one hour. Various items were pointed out and John Rees agreed these would be addressed.

DH said that she still thought that John Rees would not agree to having the list of works published on the FOP website so this was dropped as an action point (refer Minutes 11 November 2009, Para. 6)

9 Park Watch

DF reported, in writing, that 2010 started very well with no vandalism, so far, compared to 2009. However, play area equipment is being abused by older youths; these facilities in the play area are for younger children. Litter is still a problem.

10 Newsletter

FC said she hoped to prepare the contents for an April newsletter, which would be delivered to the printer on her return from six weeks away. This would be distributed in mid April. Contents could include updates on the community bridge and other facilities in the park; the budget outcome; proposed events; the proposed projects, and details about the new ExComm member. Also, the membership application form and standing order form.

11 AOB

There was no other business.

12 Date of next meeting

This was agreed for Tuesday 11 May at 6.30pm. DH offered to book the room.