



Minutes of Friends of Pittville Executive Committee Meeting – 11 May 2010

1 Members present

Hon Chairman Judy Langhorn (JL)
Hon Secretary Fiona Clarke (FC)
Hon Treasurer Paul Weston (PW)
Colin Eynon (CE)
Judie Hodsdon (JH)
Anne Roberts (AR)
Park Watch Representative Desmond Fitzgerald (DF))
Ward Cllr Diane Hibbert (DH)
Ward Cllr Tim Cooper (TC)

1.1 Apologies

Christine Sharpe

2 Minutes of Executive Committee (ExComm) meeting – 16 February 2010

The minutes of the previous meeting were unanimously approved as being a true record of that meeting.

3 Matters arising (Previous minutes' reference)

3.1 Pittville Park's gates (item 2) JL and FC confirmed that Karen Radford had supplied the list of funding resources; the £19,000 quote was for one set of gates and railings at the pump room; £5000 had been offered for replacement of the pump room gates and railings, but never received as the project was long delayed in the planning process, by which time the donor had died; and other ExComm members had been given the documentation about Pittville Park's gates.

3.2 The community bridge (item 4.1) – JL informed ExComm members that the schedule had slipped. The Tender Return date was 30 April; the successful contractor would be notified by 18 May. DF reported that 14 tenders had been received.

3.3 Cheltenham in Bloom and related matters (item 6) - AR and JH had written reports after attending a meeting on 8 March. JH attended the next meeting on 12 April. She reported that this meeting was also rather long. They focussed on local areas, which were very active and did so many good things. Cheltenham will not take part in the national Britain in Bloom competition, but Charlton Kings and Warden Hill may enter as local areas.

The council will still provide planters to mark Britain in Bloom and Pittville may have one or two at Pittville Gates. This location is chosen because it is on CBC's watering truck route.

JH noted that there had been no enquiries or entries yet for our 'Plant for Pittville' Competition. In a way this was not surprising as Pittville does not have a community centre like other areas, and it might be too early in the year. It was agreed to send a reminder to Friends through an e-mail. **Action: FC**

JH suggested we mention the Cheltenham local area entries in Britain in Bloom in the next FOP newsletter. **Action: FC**

3.4 CBC initiatives (item 7.4) - CBC's community development outreach worker, Jamie Clarke, is now compiling a monthly list of events all over Cheltenham; FC forwards this to Ron Pattinson who adds the Pittville Park events to a new section on the FOP web-site, 'What's on'. These events are both CBC and non-CBC. JL updated ExComm members on the three notice boards in the park which FOP now maintains on behalf of CBC. She noted that she had suggested we include information about Samaritans just the day before the school girl had died in Pittville Lawn.

3.5 Funding (item 7.5) - FC reported that she, PW and JL had been looking into FOP applying for charity status. Because our annual income is less than £5000 we are not required to register with the Charity Commission and, indeed, our application would not be considered. However, we can apply for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) charity status, which is also a less demanding process. With this status we can claim back Gift Aid and tax on other income (NOTE: not VAT as FC said at the meeting).

FC has completed the form, including the short statement on the public benefit of what we do. She will send the application form to ExComm members for comment, asking also for a statement that they agree with making the application. She will give a week for ExComm members to respond. **Action: FC**

CE asked if we had to provide audited accounts; PW confirmed these would be available if required. However, for the application only the most recent annual financial return was required. CE hoped that FOP was not too small to be accepted by HMRC. (See also paragraph 6 below)

4 Picnic, 23 May 2010 – JL reminded ExComm members that the first FOP picnic was a week on Sunday, on 23 May from 12.00-2.30pm. As well as a social function, the aim is to get more members involved. The new postcards (about which JL had written to ExComm members earlier) will be available; there will be a couple of simple fun games. She will bring her boules set, as this was mentioned at CBC's focus group on recreation and catering facilities on 28 January, as another recreational facility which could be offered in the park. She has not identified someone to talk about the wildlife nor found a musician. On music, CE suggested asking Pittville School; TC knows a classical guitarist. **Action: JL to ask school; TC to ask his contact**

DF was concerned about litter, but JL reassured him there would be no litter left behind. CE offered to bring some large black rubbish bins. **Action: JL to confirm with CE if these are needed**

CE wondered where people would park, as it was quite a walk for more elderly or infirm members and guests. He mentioned the car park behind the leisure centre as being reasonably close and free of charge.

It was agreed that a reminder about the picnic would be sent this coming weekend and Friends would be told about the car park. **Action: FC**

JL reminded ExComm members that this location was chosen to promote that side of the park and because there was new equipment, fishing platforms and play areas for older children to reveal. She had hoped work on the bridge would have started, but this is unlikely. DF thought it was an excellent choice. AR wondered if the police needed to be informed, but JL said this was not necessary as it is a private event; CBC knows.

Some ExComm members had already said they were unable to attend because of prior commitments; the date was difficult because of the May bank holidays and not wanting to clash with other outdoor events in Cheltenham in May.

5 Friends of Pittville and planning applications – DF outlined why he thought FOP should become involved with planning applications. He thought FOP should be seen to be helping the people of Pittville, as PARA had done. We would not have to comment on every planning application, only those where residents might be adversely affected. For example, in Albert Road he had been affected by plans for new buildings. He didn't think FOP was doing much else of significance and he couldn't see us getting any lottery money. He suggested a compromise as trying it for a year. He said that CBC was looking to FOP to pick this up.

DH asked for clarification on this last point. DF said CBC wanted us to receive all the applications (NOTE: no formal approach has been made to JL or FC). DH responded that this could be very divisive within FOP; there were many complex planning guidelines; judgements would be personal judgements. TC noted that we'd only have negative things to say; there could be potential conflict. DH granted that the group that had opposed the proposed apartment block development in Pittville Crescent had been very effective, but this had been a personal initiative. TC asked, for example, should FOP have a view on the proposed nursing home in Windsor Street? CE noted that there were a number of issues, e.g. use of the FOP database for lobbying against the Pittville Crescent development; one of the roles of the local councillors is to deal with planning applications; perhaps where there is clear indication of intrusion in the park maybe FOP can be involved, but not to be involved with individual situations. DF responded that the park **and** estate should be our concern.

JL invited DH to speak again. DH noted that FOP had been involved in the community bridge application; we had agreed not to be involved with the St Vincent's application. We cannot foresee how many planning applications there might be each year, and suggested that she and TC, as ward councillors, could filter them, passing on those which they thought were appropriate. Otherwise, how could we deal with large numbers;

there would have to be a sub-committee. DF thought there would be about 60 applications a year, with 6 being of interest to FOP.

JL said she had had experience of the amount of work required when her husband was PARA chairman and it was a nightmare, with people phoning all day and night about the different applications.

DH asked if we would publicise the applications in our newsletter; PARA did and it ended up with them being seen to be antagonistic towards the council. TC asked if we are a pressure group. There could be other areas where we might exert pressure, but that is not our main function. His example was the pump room, where we could ask why they are not getting better use and value out of it. If there was the occasional planning application such as the Lido and the car park proposals, we would be involved but, in general, no.

DF asked again, did we as a group want to deal with planning applications? JH said that she had been affected by the Pittville Crescent proposal and it had been useful to have the group. She saw that if it was a small house application, it could get personal. She does not think FOP should be involved and agreed with DH, that if the councillors raise an issue concerning the park and estate, then FOP as a group can take a view. DF said he was happy with that.

DH said in that case (FOP involvement) use could be made of the FOP mailing list. She and TC will know about any application; they will make an assessment. It is bring things in rather than throwing things out. JL agreed – we don't want to be seen as 'whingers' but want to be able to say 'this is so important we can't ignore it. TC said we'd be approached all the time if it was advertised.

PW then said we should revisit our objectives which include the 'public enjoyment' of the park; this matter had been discussed on a number of occasions now; he sees the bridge as being relevant but not St Vincent's. He is very uncomfortable with getting into an area where we have a new arm; he does not want a PARA role; the councillors are the first port of call. JL agreed there is a job to be done, but not us.

DF said the JH had summed it up quite well for him. Applications would come to us on a one-off basis and the ExComm would vote on it. He wants us to be flexible and open as we can be and we have the right to say no.

CE said he totally agreed with PW. Perhaps the Constitution will need to be changed – but he doesn't want the public to rely on us; we should be involved only when planning applications encroach on the park and estate.

Action: FC to check constitution

JL put the motion to the vote: that FOP does not tackle planning applications unless alerted by the ward councillors to applications which affect the **(public enjoyment of the)** park and estate. **All were in favour**

6 Projects and funding

FC, after the last ExComm meeting, had prepared a spreadsheet of possible projects ranging from Pittville Gates' restoration at over £130,000 at 2008 prices to volunteer working parties, costing nothing. She had asked for comments, additions etc. and sent ExComm members a revised list in April, asking each ExComm member to nominate their 'top five' projects. She then prepared a list of these which were distributed at the meeting. There were 15 projects which were to be considered in order of number of votes.

DF asked what CBC could really afford to do; FC said that she and JL were to meet CBC's Adam Reynolds on Thursday 13 May to ascertain the latest financial situation; to explore how committed CBC would be to supporting FOP in its quest for alternative sources of funding, and to see what amount of assistance in kind might be available. JL said she had done a lot of research into different charities, using the list provided by Karen Radford and her own sources (refer 3.1 above). There are considerable funds available within charities and that's why it is important for FOP to get charity status as this is a requirement for applying to some charities, e.g. the Summerfield Trust in Cheltenham.

JH thought that we should do a large long term project, e.g. Pittville Gates (6 votes in shortlist). It will take a long time but is worth accomplishing. DH said she'd been talking to Civic Pride staff before the election and that if there were money for that, we could tap in. But unless we have it as a priority, we will have no clout. If we start actively looking for money, we may surprise ourselves. PW agreed; Pittville Gates was more important than his first choice, the Pump Room railings and gates which he had gone for because they were cheaper. JL said the Civic Society (refer item 7 below) was interested when we told them we might be going for this project. TC mentioned Section 106 money but, whatever money there was, it is politically good for FOP to have a priority list.

CE asked if it was sensible to include the pump room gates and railings as they are also prestigious; we could have one project, in two phases. TC agreed, but JH was concerned that the pump room gates and railing were not decrepit and might distract from Pittville Gates. CE still wanted both.

DF asked if there would be a cut off period when we stopped seeking funding, if we don't have any luck. He was thinking of all the disappointments we have had; it's a lot of money to raise. DH thought that if Regent Arcade is sold perhaps the gates would be reconsidered by CBC.

It was agreed that Pittville Gates and the Pump Room East and West gates and railings would be the large project, in two phases. FC suggested that a small working party/sub-committee manages the project and related fund raising, with appropriate plans, especially around communications.

JL asked whether, as well as this big project, we wanted some smaller ones too. She invited comments, based on the shortlist.

TC was very keen to get **duck feeding stations** around the lakes (4 votes in shortlist). This could be a money spinner for FOP; if we manage the feeders, we keep the proceeds. CE wondered if we had the resources as it would be quite a commitment in time. TC said he knew these were used in other parks and he's seen them in Harlow. TC offered to investigate types of feeders available, what CBC would be responsible for and what FOP might be able to do. This was agreed. **Action: TC**

AR said that if we raised a large amount of money she still wanted a **water feature** (1 vote in shortlist); it did not have to be a fountain. This had not been on the original spreadsheet, and PW pointed out that although it was on the final shortlist no-one else had voted for it.

JL asked what people thought of **interpretation boards** depicting wildlife, plants, and historic buildings such as the bandstand, the cafe, boathouse etc. (4 votes on shortlist). This was agreed. FC and JL will ask Adam Reynolds at the meeting on 14 May what CBC would be able to offer and discuss what FOP might do. **Action: FC and JL**

FC outlined her enthusiasm for **restoring the historic vista from the pump room over the east lake** (3 votes in shortlist). In reality this meant removing the large dead trunk and another less bulky dead tree on the south side of the lake and clearing all the blackberries and other undergrowth along the lake's edge. This idea had been put to her by former Chairman, Tony Mason, who had encouraged Benjamin Bowen, owner of Hotel on the Park, to think about sponsoring it. AR was in favour but would like to see it cleared all the way to Central Cross Cafe. This was agreed to be worth exploring with Adam Reynolds. **Action: FC and JL**

7 Civic Society meeting, 26 April 2010

JL reported that FOP had been invited to a meeting of Cheltenham parks and gardens and similar 'friends groups', arranged by the Civic Society. She and FC attended. The aim was for groups to exchange ideas, including their experience, priorities, problems, issues etc. and possibly learn from this sharing. The groups were Friends of Imperial Square and Gardens, Battledown Estate, Save the Countryside and Friends of Swindon Village. FSV had learned that if they focussed on the history of the village they could engage people in defending against further expansion into green spaces. S the C said they had lobbied at the highest national level to encourage use of brownfield sites for development.

We were interested to learn that FISG were hoping to replace the railings around the square and they were thinking of fund raising through a 'sponsor a railing' scheme. They had been very complimentary about FOP's activities and wanted to stay in touch.

We were pressed for a view by the Civic Society chairman about the urn on the roundabout on Prestbury Road; we said strictly speaking it fell outside the Pittville Estate, and we had not been involved in the planning application in a formal capacity.

He was interested in Pittville Gates but thought that until the traffic flow was reversed the full visual potential of the gates would not be realised. We agreed this is true, but this is not a sufficient reason for not doing something now to restore the gates which are in an appalling condition.

8 FOP/CBC sub-committee 'walkabouts' and meetings, and Park Watch

Since the last ExComm meeting, there had been a sub-committee meeting on 26 February; walkabouts on 12 March and 9 April, and a meeting on 22 April; there would be another walkabout on 14 May. There was nothing significant to report that wasn't covered elsewhere in this meeting. However, TC said that planning permission for the Prestbury Road roundabout urn had been given and that the planting should begin soon.

DF had sent an e-mail today to say that work had begun off-site on constructing hardwood balustrades for the bandstand near the Pump Room.

CE noted that he saw groups of people walking in the park and wondered how we could inform the public about this through our web site. FC said she'd investigate these walks. **Action: FC**

9 Postcards and Christmas cards

JL showed ExComm members the two postcards which Ron Pattinson had produced, using his images. These are a winter scene of the Pump Room and a summer scene of the Boathouse. These will be sold at events in which FOP participates (refer item 10 below). The price will be 3 for £1, thus raising funds for FOP. It was suggested that they could also be sold at the Pump Room, the Boathouse, Central Cross Cafe, and perhaps Hotel on the Park. TC said it could be through an honesty box.

JL said she could also make business cards for ExComm members if they wanted them. She showed them a name tag for each ExComm member which she had made and which would be used by those who attended the picnic; they would also be for events (refer item 10 below) and at FOP AGM.

FC reported that Ron Pattinson had been in touch, asking if FOP was interested in a Christmas card for 2010. FC would like to have two different cards; they will be smaller than last year's, A6 when folded, and sell for less than last year's price. As time was getting short to discuss at this meeting, she will e-mail ExComm members the details, the images selected (from Ron's Photo Gallery) by her and JL, and ask for agreement to making the investment. The minimum order is 250 per image. **Action: FC**

10 Events held by other organisations

10.1 Mormons volunteer group – this will be working in the west side of the park, under CBC supervision, cutting back undergrowth around the lake etc. The date is 26 June (not 23rd as in the agenda). It is about 200 people. FC thought it would be a good idea to let members know this was happening and perhaps post it on the web-site. **Action: FC**

10.2 Cheltenham Local History Society Local History Afternoon, 18 July – FC has asked if FOP could attend and CLHS was very enthusiastic about it. FC will attend and asked for another ExComm member to join her. She will e-mail ExComm members with the details and confirm who will attend to the rest of the committee. **Action: FC**

10.3 Cheltenham Horticultural Society, 14 August – this group invited FOP to join them in the Pump Room for their summer flower and craft show. JH offered to help man the FOP display with FC.

FC noted that the aim of attending such events was to recruit new members; raise awareness of what FOP is doing; seek feedback and comments from the public about the park and other green spaces and pass these to CBC as appropriate.

FC mentioned that she had just seen details of **Bands in the Park** in the Town Hall's brochure. She asked if ExComm members thought it worth trying yet again to ensure that the ice-cream bicycles are brought out, at least on the five Sundays the bands are playing in Pittville. This was agreed. FC will ask Adam Reynolds about it at the meeting on 13 May with him. **Action: FC**

11 Nominations for ExComm members at AGM

JL said the AGM was not that far away and it was time to begin thinking in earnest about having new and the full quota of members on the committee. Two current members will be standing down. It would be good to attract some younger people to bring fresh ideas and experiences to the group. DF thought this was right; we need young people as one of the reasons PARA folded was because there were not new people to take on a role as committee members.

12 AOB

There was no other business.

13 Date of next meeting

This was agreed for Tuesday 3 August at 6.30pm. DH offered to book the room.