



Minutes of Friends of Pittville Executive Committee Meeting – 3 August 2010

1 Members present

Hon Chairman Judy Langhorn (JL)
Hon Secretary Fiona Clarke (FC)
Hon Treasurer Paul Weston (PW)
Judie Hodsdon (JH)
Anne Roberts (AR)
Christine Sharpe (CS)
Ward Cllr Diane Hibbert (DH)
Ward Cllr Tim Cooper (TC)

1.1 Apologies

Colin Eynon (CE)
Park Watch Representative Desmond Fitzgerald (DF)

1.2 Observer: prospective Executive Committee member Andy Hopkins, except for items 3.1 – 3.3. and item 4

2 Minutes of Executive Committee (ExComm) meeting – 11 May 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 Duck food dispensers (item 6) - FC reported that she had not found any dispensers for sale on the internet. However, in her research she read that some people were concerned that such dispensers led to ducks and swans attacking customers and, also, it led to bird manure in the area which was not pleasant. Others said that ducks and swans should not be fed at all. However, given that CBC discourages park users from feeding them bread and purports to sell the appropriate food, we should persist with the idea. TC reported that, after much effort, he had identified some lolly dispensers (jelly beans, gumballs etc.) and this is probably what we have to buy. They cost about £25 and dispense sweets at 20p, 50p and £1.00.

Action: TC to provide details to FC

3.2 Runners and walkers in the park (item 8) - FC had researched the various groups in the park and forwarded the information to the web manager. She noted that this information would need to be refreshed from time to time.

Action: FC, every three months

3.3 Postcards and Christmas cards (item 9) – FC reported that she now had the Christmas cards. Sales at the Local History Afternoon on 18 July had not been as good as expected (11 Christmas cards and 9 postcards). She had investigated selling the postcards at the Pump Room but staff were not willing to take them at this uncertain time (staff changes, reduced opening hours etc.). It was agreed to publicise the cards in the next newsletter, through e-mail and letter to members, on the website, and for ExComm members to take some to sell themselves.

Action: FC to organise

3.4 CLHS's Local History Afternoon, 18 July (item 10.3) – JH reported that we were in a back room (with two other groups) so some people might not have found us. Nevertheless we had a number of useful conversations; there was a fair amount of interest in the gates project, and most people knew about it. We signed up four new members, including Councillor John Rawson and Cheltenham historian Sue Rowbotham.

John Rawson was particularly interested in our wish to link the restoration to the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

3.5 Ice-cream bicycle (item 10.3) - FC reported that she had eventually spoken to the CBC catering manager who had several reasons why the bicycle had not been taken out to the park, but it was now working and there was someone to operate it. FC met the ex-CBC staff member who operates it and, unlike the catering manager, he thought that there was profit in selling ice-creams. FOP would be keen to take on this venture. DH reported that the bicycle had only been taken out a few times since June and that the battery was currently flat. No-one seemed to know how to get this fixed. The ExComm was amazed at this news and CS offered to help find a replacement battery.

Action: DH to send contact details of CBC officer to CS

4 FOP communications – JL said we were about to launch fund-raising for restoration of Pittville Gates. We have to have everything in place to communicate as we would wish, through e.g. e-mails to members, holding events, press interviews, information and messages on the website.

The reason for raising this matter now was that it is crucial that FOP is speaking with one voice, in particular with CBC staff and elected councillors, and representatives of other organisations. We have begun to build good relations with these people and made our ethos known to them.

After some discussion of the issues and the implications, it was agreed that a critical review of the various communication tools would be carried out.

Action: JL and FC

5 Pittville Gates restoration project – JL informed ExComm that two of its members had offered to join the project sub-committee, Judie Hodsdon and Diane Hibbert. The sub-committee would like one more person in due course, maybe from those elected at the forthcoming AGM. Judie Hodsdon has agreed to lead the sub-committee.

JH reminded ExComm that the project included both Pittville Gates and the railings and gates on either side of the Pump Room. If enough money became available we would include the latter. FOP's role is that of a pressure group, in that we are keen and interested, we want to lead on the restoration and to drive it through to see results. Our main practical work will be fund raising, which means winning people over.

The sub-committee has the beginnings of a plan; it would be useful to have another member with fund raising experience. We now have an HM Revenue and Customs charity number which will facilitate applications to other charities. FC, with input from JL and JH, has drawn up a 'vision' for Pittville Gates and surrounding area – what the gates could look like, and what we want the project to achieve in terms of public enjoyment and convenience. We are awaiting an illustration, based on the written vision (offered by Civic Pride managing director). We need to research the gates' history – there is very little in published sources. We also need to find out if any of the original ironwork is in storage somewhere. .

We also need a costing for the three major elements – the stonework, the ironwork and the surrounding area - and detailed costs for individual stone blocks and railings etc. AH asked if he could comment – he thought the costs for the stonework given in the previous minutes were extraordinarily high. DH explained that these figures had been supplied by a firm commissioned by the consultants to produce a condition survey for the HLF bid.

We need to decide if we launch the project with a completion date to coincide with the Diamond Jubilee in 2012. DH cautioned against setting up to fail – it was a short time scale. AR and AH agreed.

DH said that the gates area is now included in Civic Pride (she had achieved this through discussions with Cllr John Morris) and the project could attract Civic Pride money. She suggested that FOP ask if it can be part of the Civic Pride initiative; this would send a message to the public and could also encourage money from CBC. It would be good if FOP could get a commitment in writing, as it would show potential funders that the borough council was positive about the gates. TC thought that the gates might be a 'quick fix', something that was relatively quick and visible.

It was agreed that a letter would be sent to Civic Pride, restating FOP commitment to Pittville Gates as part of Civic Pride and requesting that FOP become part of **Cheltenham Development Task Force**

Action: JH

JH went on to say the sub-committee had identified the main stakeholders, e.g. CBC, Civic Society, English Heritage and main supporters, e.g. councillors, the local MP, Cheltenham historians, local businesses. It has also identified key funding sources, from individuals sponsoring a stone block or a railing to the national government providing a grant. Ideally CBC would provide cash but, if that were not possible initially, staff time spent on project management should be costed in. It is important to remember that the gates are a Cheltenham project, not only Pittville's, and it would be nice to acknowledge major donors on a plaque or a heritage board. .

AH suggested that the heritage people are involved from the beginning; DH thought it might be appropriate to invite someone onto the sub-committee.

6 Executive Committee and AGM – JL had received a letter from a prospective ExComm member; FC reported she had interest from four people, including Andy Hopkins here this evening as an observer. A fifth person was proving more elusive – she is said to be interested but has not replied to two e-mail approaches.

FC will bring the nomination form to the next ExComm meeting for those who wish to stand again; she will also ensure that new people receive the form and return it at least two weeks before the AGM, as set out in the constitution. She will prepare a list of nominees with brief details of those who are standing for the first time.

Action: FC

Members must be given notice of the AGM at least three weeks before it is held. It will be at Dunalley School again, starting at 7pm. The room is booked for Wednesday 6 October. However this date could be changed (see next paragraph). PLEASE NOTE THAT THE DATE WILL CHANGE UNTIL ONE LATER IN OCTOBER.

FC suggested we have a speaker and it was decided to invite Cheltenham historian and FOP member, Steven Blake, to speak for about 15 minutes about the history and social significance of Pittville Gates. This is to inspire and enthuse members and to get them behind the project. It was agreed that it would be more useful to have the heritage and conservation officer and another local restoration project speaker, e.g. Norwood Triangle, to an ExComm or sub-committee meeting. DH said that the date might have to be changed if the chosen speaker was unavailable on 6 October.

Action: FC

The current Treasurer is standing down at the AGM, so a new one must be found. None of the current ExComm members eligible to take that role are able to. The Chairman and Secretary agreed to discuss what to do.

Action: FC and JL

PW said he would set up all the systems for Gift Aid and privacy statements on a redesigned membership application form before he resigned. He was thanked in advance for this.

Action: PW

(Not reported at the meeting, but there are no constitutional changes, as of today, which need to be put to members at the AGM. Refer item 5, Minutes 11 May 2010, about planning applications).

7 Lower Lake Bridge update – TC reported that he had been pressing Cllr. Whyborn about the bridge and has been assured that it will be built and the money found. FC said that she'd been told, by Adam Reynolds, that CBC would have something to report at the beginning of this week, but to date, that information had not come.

8 FOP/CBC sub-committee 'walkabouts' and meetings, and Park Watch – this item was held over as time ran out.

9 Pump Room opening hours and other catering facilities – TC reported that he had investigated rumours that the Pump Room would close to visitors and be used only for functions and events. He had been assured that the building would not be closed to visitors. FC said she had also checked on the plans and learned, from staff there, that there were reduced hours for the time being (open mornings only).

She also said that she had chased Mark Woodward, a project manager in CBC about the report into recreational and catering facilities in Montpellier and Pittville Parks, which had been due in the summer.

He had replied *'After the get together and consultation period a cabinet member decision was made to instruct officers to proceed with market testing of catering and outdoor recreation services in Montpellier Gardens and Pittville Park, including public consultation on the potential disposal under lease of the relevant*

buildings to facilitate outsourcing should it prove the best option. This exercise will take place during the autumn.

With regard to the Pump Room I will pass your comments onto the Pump Room Business Manager.'

The Pump Room business manager replied and offered to meet FC (and JL); a date has yet to be agreed.

Action: FC

10 Postcard and photograph evening - this item was deferred as time ran out

11 Events held by other organisations

- **Cheltenham Horticultural Society Summer Show, 14 August** – JH and FC will represent FOP
- **Cheltenham Local History Society meeting, November** – CLHS invited FOP to sell its Christmas cards at this meeting; date to be confirmed

12 AOB

DH reported that CBC's Budget Consultation 2011/12 had begun. One method it was using is to go to events and venues, e.g. National Play Day on 4 August, Regent Arcade, community centres etc. with lists of all the council's services, and to ask the public to vote on these (to keep, reduce or stop the service). The budget will be 'informed' by what people say. There is also a hard copy form on which people can write comments or ask to become involved in a panel on the budget consultation. The list of current services and activities can be downloaded from the internet, then printed, filled out and sent to CBC. DH suggested that FOP members be informed about the consultation and encouraged to send in their comments (once the process and means is provided on the CBC website). Non e-mail members would need to be written to separately.

Action: FC

13 Date of next meeting

This was agreed for Wednesday 22 September at 6.30pm. DH offered to book the room.