

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the Milton Country Park Advisory Group held on  
Thursday, 1 December 2005

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs HM Smith – Chairman

Councillors: R Hall Mrs HF Kember  
RT Summerfield

Also in attendance was Councillor DP Roberts, Community Development Portfolio Holder, Stephen Bennett, Chairman of the Friends of Milton Country Park and Paul Oldham, Milton Parish Council.

### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs SA Hatton and Mrs JA Muncey.

### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2.1 Councillors Mrs HM Smith and RT Summerfield, together with Paul Oldham declared an interest as members of Milton Parish Council with respect to matters concerning the future management of the Park.

### **3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

3.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2005 were confirmed as a correct record.

### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

4.1 **Minute 6.5 – Dog Update** – It was noted that,

- (a) there had been no reports of incidences relating to dogs since the erection of warning notices,
- (b) it would be difficult to prosecute offenders without the support of the Dog Warden,
- (c) the Dog Warden post had remained frozen as a result of Council Tax capping
- (d) owners of land would, in the future, have powers to invoke on the spot fines to owners of offending dogs.

4.2 **Minute 7.1 – Rubbish bin at the Community Centre** – HS reported that there was no longer fishermen's litter in the recreation grounds bins and the Community Centre was content with the present arrangement. It was therefore agreed that the temporary bin sited by the Ranger adjacent to the path to the Community Centre should remain.

4.3 **Minute 7.5 – Re-surfacing of paths** – this remained outstanding due to inclement weather delaying construction of the storage facility.

### **5. CAPPING AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

5.1 A proposed public meeting to discuss the implications of capping on the Park was met with a favourable response from the Advisory Group. It was decided that a meeting would be held on Sunday, 22 January 2006 at 2pm in conjunction with the Friends of the Park. PO offered to publicise the event on the village website; the Cambridge Evening News

would also be informed.

- 5.2 DR informed the meeting that she had received several letters from residents, voicing their concern about the effects of capping on the Park.

## 6. INCREASING INCOME AT THE PARK

- 6.1 SM reported that a consultant from the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management had visited the Park the previous day and his initial findings had indicated that increasing income at the Park was the way forward. The areas where additional income could be derived from were discussed as follows:

- 6.2 (a) **Car Parking** – It was noted that the majority of Country Parks made a charge for parking. The Ranger was in the process of investigating suppliers and the cash handling aspect of Pay and Display machines. A discount for regular users of the Park was suggested and **SM** was tasked with examining quarterly and annual rates for users, together with the possibility of a donations box. It was noted that the consultant had suggested that a notice be displayed in the car park showing the costs of running the Park as an explanation on why charges were being implemented.
- 6.3 (b) **Catering** – The consultant had indicated that the catering facility was severely under-used and suggested moving the café area to the upstairs part of the Visitors' Centre with the seating area overlooking the lake; the catering facilities could either be provided in-house or a separate company. Moving the café may result in a reduction in event hire, however an improved catering facility would more than compensate for that loss of income. He also suggested moving part of the car park closer to the Visitors' Centre in order to encourage elderly persons to the Park although this aspect was regarded as a longer-term issue.

The Advisory Group welcomed the ideas suggested and it was agreed that officers would investigate the management of Hinchingsbrooke Country Park kiosk and other smaller independent catering facilities. **SM/MB to action**

- 6.4 (c) **Use of rooms in the Visitors' Centre** – The scale of charges as appended to the covering report for usage of the centre was considered and **agreed** with the addition that under 'Standard Hire Hours c)' the Senior Ranger reserves the right to *Allow or refuse* hire outside standard hours. It was noted that car parking would not be included in the fee.
- 6.5 (d) **Fishing** – It was agreed that there was limited income potential from fishing at the Park, however the Ranger had arranged some restocking with young carp in order to boost the ageing stock.
- 6.6 (e) **Events** – The consultant had suggested the possibility of an adventure playground and various ideas were generally discussed, however Members felt that this was inappropriate at this particular time.
- 6.7 (f) **Education** – Local primary schools on a repeat basis were the main users of the education facilities at the park and had historically not been charged, although some schools had made a contribution both monetary and in-kind. To expand the provision for schools would require the production of education packs costing several thousands of pounds. In conclusion Members **agreed** to continue with educational visits for a set fee.

6.8 (g) **General Observations** – Tomkins Mead – As this area was owned by the Parish Council but managed by this Council, the costs to manage Tomkins Mead were requested. **SM to produce costs**

6.9 It was agreed not to consider the use of any park land for housing. Exploration of other possible options for land adjacent to the entrance road would be taken forward. **SM to action**

#### **Options considered**

6.10 (a) **Car Parking**

- It was agreed that the initial parking fee should be £1.00, and a quarterly ticket, valid for 3 months from the application date, would be available for £14.00. An increase in fees would be evaluated following analysis of car park usage.
- Should the fishermen benefit from free parking? **SM to explore with the fishing club**
- Members were mindful that the introduction of charges for parking might encourage motorists to park outside the gates of the Park and aggravate companies situated there. **SM** would contact the affected companies prior to the implementation of charging
- The enforcement of parking charges required investigation. **MB to action**

6.11 (b) **Catering**

- Mencap to be informed of the Advisory Group's considerations regarding the kiosk. **SM to action**

6.12 (c) **Education**

- It was **agreed** that the level of any donation should be agreed in advance with the school and set at £1.00 per child per day or part day, with the proviso that park staff can waive the donation where appropriate.

## **7. MANAGEMENT OF THE PARK BY OTHER ORGANISATIONS**

7.1 It was **RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this item in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (exempt information as defined in Paragraph 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act).

7.2 A full written report containing a range of options on the future management of the Park from the appointed consultants was expected in due course. Areas to be addressed were

- Rangers
- Catering
- Partnership working

7.3 Members noted that several organisations had expressed an interest in managing the Park and one in particular was showing strong evidence of their serious interest in taking over the Park. Members felt that this was premature to the consultation process and requested that the Head of Community Services contact the organisation expressing their disquiet.

- 7.4 The remainder of the report was noted with the Advisory Group supporting the further investigation of the options for the future management of the Park.

## **8. RANGERS REPORT**

- 8.1 The Advisory Group, having considered the contents of the Rangers report, also noted
- (a) that the Head of Community Services was awaiting a legal response concerning the teenager who had breached fishing rules and park byelaws,
  - (b) that additional graffiti had occurred the previous day; **MB to report to Police**
  - (c) the Ranger would continue to empty the bin by the entrance to the Community Centre Recreation Area,
  - (d) that the first section of the boundary hedge to the Cambridge Evening News building had been planted with the help of Milton Primary School. A picture of the children and senior management had appeared in the CEN, and
  - (e) the support of the Conservation Section that the Park be put forward by the Council as a Local Nature Reserve; this would be considered by the Community Development Portfolio Holder on 6 December.

## **9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

- 9.1 The next meeting of the Advisory Group will be held on Thursday, 2 March 2006 at 10am.

## **10. WALK AROUND THE PARK**

- 10.1 At the end of the formal part of the meeting, several members of the Advisory Group viewed the additional storage area that had recently been created in the building and the areas of parkland that could be further utilised to create additional income for the Park.

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**The Meeting ended at 12.35 p.m.**

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