

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Milton Country Park Advisory Group held on
Monday, 9 October 2006

PRESENT: Councillor R Hall – Chairman
Councillor Mrs CAED Murfitt – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: PT Johnson
Mrs HM Smith
RT Summerfield

and Councillor Mrs VG Ford (Community Development Portfolio Holder).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs HM Smith and RT Summerfield both declared an interest as members of Milton Parish Council and Milton Community Centre Charity.

3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2006 were agreed as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- Minute 7.4 heading to read *Milton Parish Council*
- Minute 7.16 – substitute 'the Milton Community Trust' with *Milton Parish Council*

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

Minute 6.6 – County Council attendance – In response to a query regarding an invitation for a representative of the County Council to attend this meeting, it was noted that SMC had been unable to gain a commitment from the County Council to attend any meetings to discuss matters relating to the Park.

Minute 7.8 – Income from parking charges – In response to a question as to how the estimated income of £30,000 from parking charges was derived, the Group was informed that although a counting mechanism installed at the entrance to the Park indicated that there were 90,000 visitors per annum, many of those visitors were at the Park for only a short time, eg during the lunchtime period and not actually getting out of their cars and this had been taken into consideration when estimating the income.

Update on Progress Management Options for the Park

The Advisory Group noted the following information:

- The Portfolio Holder had had discussions recently regarding future budgets, with the outcome that there was a serious shortfall in finances for maintaining the Park. She was however due to meet later that day with representatives from the Science Park with the possibility of obtaining monetary contributions towards the cost of maintaining the Park

- Reducing the costs in maintaining the Park would result in a decline in the standard of facilities and maintenance of the Park
- Setting up a Trust with local communities was deemed the way forward as lottery funding could be applied for. It was noted that SCDC did not have the in-house specialist knowledge for setting up an appropriate Trust, however SMC had obtained details of a company called 'Prohelp' who may be able to help
- No progress made yet concerning a framework for a Trust
- If the work links with the College of West Anglia was successful, they should continue
- If Mencap were to take over the Park, a monetary contribution from this Council would still be expected
- Parking charges were unlikely to cover the cost of maintaining the Park
- An open meeting was suggested in order to keep the public informed and involved. **SB/VF/SMC** to liaise
- Financial information was still awaited from Mencap regarding present and projected income from the kiosk

5. RANGERS REPORT

The Advisory Group, having noted the contents of the report suggested ways in which to raise income at the park, these included:

- Camping activities for scouts
- Christmas parties
- Wedding venue
- Advertising at the entrance to the Visitors' centre that it can be hired

The Ranger undertook to:

- explore all possibilities mentioned above
- encourage NAPP to include an article in the Science Park magazine about the volunteer work undertaken by some of its staff in the Park on 8 September
- include an article in the next available South Cambs magazine concerning the recent survey undertaken on the breeding birds in the Park

In conclusion, the Advisory Group expressed its thanks to the Ranger and his staff for all the work undertaken during the summer months.

6. CATERING UPDATE

SMC reported that he had contacted several catering operators in order to establish a potential operator for the kiosk at the Park. Many of them had requested details of the present income derived by the Mencap operation and as reported in 'matters arising' Mencap had been reluctant to impart this information.

It was proposed and agreed that,

- (a) In the interim, SMC seek expressions of interest from catering operators, including those who operated the kiosks in Cambridge City, and
- (b) Inform Mencap that a new refreshment contract would be issued from 1 April 2007, the length of the contract would be negotiable and to confirm that Mencap could re-apply.

7. WORK LINKS WITH COLLEGE OF WEST ANGLIA

The Ranger reported that:

- He had met recently with the course tutor and gained clarification on the extent to what the students could accomplish in the Park. There was also a possibility of working with other tutors at the college, eg arboriculture and horticulture
- The tutors would supervise the students
- He was awaiting confirmation whether or not the students would litter-pick

SB informed the Advisory Group that the Friends of the Park could consider providing the additional tools required for the students.

In conclusion, the Advisory Group noted the contents of the report and the information provided by the Ranger.

8. USE OF ANIMALS TO GRAZE IN THE PARK

It was reported that, although the amount of income would be minimal from allowing the grazing of animals in the Park, it would reduce the amount of grass cutting required. The south-east area of the Park had been earmarked as a possibility for grazing.

The Advisory Group,

- (a) **NOTED** the contents of the report, and having indicated that there should be no liability on the Council, particularly if electric fencing was erected,
- (b) **AGREED** that officers investigate further the grazing of sheep or cattle in the park, and if a suitable grazier was found, arrange for an agreement to be drawn up and grazing to commence for a length of time to be determined by the Head of Community Services, in consultation with the Community Development Portfolio Holder.

9. INTRODUCING PARKING CHARGES - REPORT

Following a brief discussion, the Advisory Group noted the contents of the report and confidential appendix and

AGREED

- (a) that the season ticket charge for parking would be levied at £15 per quarter
- (b) 'blue badge' holders would not be charged for parking
- (c) that once the pay and display machine was installed, a sign be erected that all money from the parking fees would go towards the upkeep of the Park

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held when necessary.

11. WALK AROUND THE PARK

The Ranger showed Members the area of the park where the grazing of animals could take place and then visited Tomkin's Mead to view the clearing of the undergrowth undertaken by the volunteers from NAPP.

The Meeting ended at 11.30 a.m.
