

**HUNTINGDON TOWN COUNCIL****FRIENDS OF THE TOWN PARK**

A meeting of the Friends of the Town Park was held in the Commemoration Hall, High Street, Huntingdon on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2010 at 7.00pm.

In attendance: Claire Kane, Deputy Town Clerk, Huntingdon Town Council; Dennis Smith, Parks Manager, Huntingdon Town Council; Katy Sismore, Huntingdon Town Partnership Manager; Peter Jackson, Chairman of Huntingdon in Bloom; Ann Colbert, Secretary of Huntingdon in Bloom; Beryl Demaine, Resident; Chris Goodliff, Huntingdon in Bloom; Lorraine Wallis, Luminus Neighbourhood Warden; Richard Northfield, Resident; Richard Callison, Resident; Chloe Sharpe, Resident; Mike Turner, Resident; Cheryl Fitzpatrick, Resident; Judy Campbell, Resident; Michael Turner, Resident; Deborah Scales, Resident.

Apologies: Sgt Michael Basford, Cambridgeshire Constabulary; PSCO Andy Goodwin, Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

---

The meeting began with introductions from those present, followed by a brief history of the Town Park presented by Claire Kane (CK).

CK went on to explain that it was the Town Council's aim to encourage people to use the Park more and advised that plans were currently underway to hold this year's Summer outdoor performances in the bandstand. The Youth Town Council were also discussing holding a Town Park picnic day later in the year and it was hoped that a Mayoral event would also take place there.

CK reminded those present that whilst the Town Park was the responsibility of the Town Council, it was hoped that by encouraging the use of the Park and formalising the Friends Group, the Park could be protected and improved for the benefit of all its users.

CK suggested the meeting should decide whether a Friends Group should be created, what the Group would like to achieve, how the goals could be reached and how the committee could be run and further that The Friends of the Town Park should reflect the skills and interests of its Members, taking a pro active approach whilst working in conjunction with the Town Council.

Peter Jackson (PJ) and Ann Colbert (AC) of Huntingdon in Bloom (HIB) then addressed the meeting.

AC began by reminding the group that Gold status had been achieved in the 2009 Anglia in Bloom competition and that HIB were aiming to repeat the success in 2010. The committee hoped to see sustainable planting, flowering trees and improved signage and welcomed the Town Council's plan to encourage the use of the Park.

PJ acknowledged that there was a history of vandalism in the Park which needed to be addressed in order to encourage its use and more planting of shrubs and flowers in the Park.

Residents expressed the view that there was a lack of Police Community Support Officers' presence in the Park and that the Park should be included in their patrol route. The group then went on to discuss a number of incidents that they had witnessed and how it was difficult to know who to report the incidents to, as they were not 999 emergencies. By the time the relevant authority had been contacted the culprits had left the Park.

CK informed the residents that they were the eyes and ears of the Park and if they saw any incidents of people breaking the law, they should report them to the Police. There was a non-emergency number that could be used or incidents could be reported to the Town Council who would log them and pass them on to the relevant parties.

It was suggested that part of the problem was that there was no CCTV for the Park. Residents of Parkside flats agreed that now CCTV was installed at the back of the flats to monitor the car park, this had reduced the damage that had occurred. The scheme had been so successful that CCTV was now being installed on the front of the building; the cameras would not monitor the Park but it was suggested this could be a deterrent to vandalism at the Park.

The Residents agreed that they would be happy for a camera which would monitor the Park to be installed on the front of the building at a cost to the Town Council. It was advised that the cameras could be rented at a reasonable cost.

It was also suggested that signage could be installed to warn members of the public that the Park was being monitored by CCTV, even if CCTV was not in operation.

There was discussion about whether the gates could be locked at night but it was felt that this was not possible; the Park had served as a throughway which had been in use for the last twenty-five years.

Residents felt that there was no need to plant new flower beds but it was agreed that more could be made of the entrances to the Park, perhaps with different types of grasses, metal work and improved signage to make the entrances more welcoming. It was also suggested that hanging baskets could be an alternative option to flower beds and more seating would be welcomed.

In connection with a question about repainting of the railings along the ring road, Dennis Smith (DS) informed the group that enquires into who was responsible for the railings had not been successful. Residents asked if the Town Council would be able to carry out this work, DS responded that he would look into this further and see if this would be possible.

Everyone agreed that the Bandstand was a welcome feature of the Park and residents at the meeting welcomed the Town Council's decision to host the Summer Outdoor Performance at the Park. It was suggested that the bandstand would make an ideal location for wedding photos for those couples who were marrying at the Registry office or the George Hotel.

PJ asked if the Park needed more play equipment. It was suggested that the only additional equipment should be four swings, specifically for babies, to encourage young mums into the Park, but there was no real need to install further equipment.

It was suggested that money from a section 106 agreement could go towards improving the Park in other areas such as the entrances and additional benches rather than play equipment.

It was agreed to form a Friends of the Town Park committee, who would meet on a quarterly basis. The Committee would elect a Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. A group formed in this way might be eligible to apply for grants that were not accessible to the Town Council.

Those who were present were asked if they would like to put themselves forward for the position of Chairman but there were no volunteers. It was agreed to hold a second meeting, after the meeting of Town Council's Leisure and Community Services Committee on May 20<sup>th</sup> 2010, where it was suggested that Members could consider the Friends' suggestions about improving the signage in the Park, in particular the use of signs advising the Park was under CCTV surveillance.

This would also allow time to publicise the Friends group and advertise for Members. It would also allow those present to consider if they would like to put themselves forward for the position of Chairman.

Date of the next meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2010, the Commemoration Hall at 7.00pm