

Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall Meeting, Wednesday 16 March 2011
The Baptist Church Centre, Fisher's Lane, Cherry Hinton

MINUTES

24 people were in attendance at the Baptist Church Centre, Cherry Hinton. Apologies were received from Mark Ashton and Robert Dryden.

1. Welcome / introduction

Bob Daines welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes and matters arising from 19 January Meeting

The minutes were agreed, there were no matters arising

3. Community Action Day, Saturday 26 March

Sandra Day reported that three banners had been purchased for £48 to advertise the day. Anthony French and Vicky Hathrell from the City Council will be co-ordinating things on the day, with a view to most work being concentrated in the area behind the pond. Activities during the day include planting 3,000 plug plants, wildflower and coir planting, and mapping where the bulbs are for future reference.

4. New Play Equipment and Maintenance Issues

Sandra and Bob reported that the new Explorer Dome play equipment was in place, together with the double slide nearby. Some people had commented that the slide looked quite small, but it did match the agreed specification. There was also good feedback regarding the sensory board near the natural play area. Most people like what they see, including the other benches and boards, including by the pond-dipping platform.

Members were also referred to Anthony French's February Bulletin, a copy of which has been made available on the Website.

5. Cambridge City Farm

▪ Meetings with Council Consultant, Phil Back

Members of the Committee met with Phil Back on Friday, 25 February, and were able to detail the concerns surrounding the siting of a City Farm on Cherry Hinton Hall grounds, in particular that we are already compromising some aspects of the Master Plan to accommodate the Cambridge Folk Festival and that even more changes would then need to be made to accommodate a City Farm; that the Friends had balloted its members who have come out strongly in favour of keeping the Folk Festival in-situ and in particular 'in its present form'; that livestock would need to be moved off site each year; concerns over traffic movements; that the footprint is constrained to the former Propagation Centre area; and that any Farm may be at odds with the Deed of Covenant specifying (e.g. no livestock).

The Committee also felt slightly uneasy insofar as there doesn't yet appear to be a detailed, adequate and robust business plan by the City Farm group. Of course, the risk of failure with respect to Cherry Hinton Hall (as opposed to alternative sites) is

that it would most likely mean a 'lost opportunity' for delivering the Master Plan – an opportunity that would be unlikely to come round again.

The Committee felt that Phil Back understood these, and other issues, very well.

Stuart mentioned that he and Russ McPherson had met with Phil Back as ward councillors, and that similar concerns were also raised (including that the group didn't seem clear on exactly what they wanted to do). Stuart and Russ had also discussed possible alternative sites (see below) with Phil Back.

- Potential Alternative Sites

As discussed earlier, one potential alternative site for the proposed Cambridge City Farm is the field at the southern corner (but not part) of Coldham's Common, diagonally opposite Sainsbury. This field is quite large, giving room for 'organic growth'; there is a brook running alongside; it is adjacent to the currently expanding Abbey Meadows Primary School; parking may be available across the road at the Horizons Training Centre; it is situated in a relatively deprived area, etc. Mark Ashton has discussed the idea of the site being used as a City Farm with Rev Barry Linney, the vicar of Cherry Hinton St Andrew (the site is owned directly by the Church, rather than the Diocese of Ely). Rev Linney was amenable to the idea, saying he would bring the matter to the attention of the Church Commissioners.

Other sites discussed for consideration were land by the Ida Darwin & Fulbourn Hospitals (previously earmarked for development), land between Fulbourn and Malletts Roads, and leasing land currently used for farming e.g. behind Cambridge Water Co on Fulbourn Road. One salient point by Russ McPherson was that he had visited Darwin Nurseries on Newmarket Road and the site already included a number of elements sought in a City Farm – community involvement and volunteering, plant growing, a farm shop, etc. The site might already include animals. It was suggested that Darwin could be approached to see whether they would be interested in developing along the lines envisaged by the City Farm group / whether they might like to partner with them.

6. Guest Speaker: Jennifer Parker, Hearing Dogs for the Deaf

Jenny brought along four guests:

Linda & Kimber (a young Cockapoo – a cross of an American Cocker Spaniel or English Cocker Spaniel and a Poodle)

NB Linda is one of the Hearing Dogs volunteer 'Puppy Socialisers' – the initial part of training.

Jane & Duncan (a fully-trained 2yr old Eurasia cross with a Golden Retriever)

Hearing Dogs for the Deaf is one of the less well known charities. Hearing loss is more of a 'hidden' disability. There are about 500,000 people in the UK who might benefit from a hearing dog.

The Charity trains hearing dogs to alert deaf people to important household sounds and danger signals such as the alarm clock, doorbell, telephone and smoke alarm - providing independence, confidence and security, as well as valuable companionship. The dogs will alert their deaf recipients to household sounds by touching them with a

paw or nudging with a nose to gain attention. The recipient then asks the dog 'what is it?' by voice and/or hand command and then the hearing dog leads the recipient to the source of the sound. For danger signals such as the smoke alarm, the hearing dog will alert the recipient in the same way, but when asked 'what is it?' the dog will lie down to indicate danger.

The charity is very important in raising money for hearing dogs – the overall cost of a dog during its working life is approximately £45,000. Because of the cost, and the time and effort taken to successfully train hearing dogs, we try to avoid failures, and are pretty strict in how we manage things. Choosing the right breeds is therefore very important - breeds trained are typically Labradors, Retrievers, Spaniels and Poodles (and crosses thereof). The dogs wear a burgundy jacket and owners and dogs are protected by disability legislation as other support dogs such as guide dogs.

About 75-80% of donations go straight to the dogs (rather than on administration etc). Many of the people involved, including at the Head Office in Princes Risborough, Bucks, are volunteers. The charity is entirely funded by donations. When dogs are placed, the recipient is responsible for most of the costs (toys, food, vet fees, insurance, etc, etc) but the charity will try and help in cases of hardship.

Training takes 18 months, and puppies (at 8 weeks to 12-14 months) are first placed with volunteers so as to become sociable animals before moving onto more structured work training at one of the charity's Training Centres. During this period a suitable recipient for each dog is identified. The recipient and hearing dog then spend a period of time training together before qualifying as an official partnership

The problem at the moment is that the charity can't train enough dogs to keep up with demand – there's a 5-year waiting list. Dogs that fail training are known as 'fallen angels'. Members of the public can go on a waiting list to receive one of these.

There followed a very lively discussion with Linda, Jane, Jenny, and members of the Friends. Linda, Jane, Jenny, Kimber and Duncan were given a healthy round of applause and thanked for such an interesting insight. The proceeds of the raffle, £35.00 were donated to the Hearing Dogs for the Deaf charity.

7. Close & Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, 18 May, at 7.30 pm, at the Baptist Church Centre, Fisher's Lane, Cherry Hinton. Anthony French will be present from the City Council. As ever: *Please bring along a raffle prize!*