

Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall Meeting

7.30 pm, Wednesday 15 November 2017
Cherry Hinton Leisure Centre, Colville Road, Cherry Hinton

Attendance and apologies

In attendance from the committee were David Taylor (Chair; DT), Stuart Newbold (SN), Sandra Day (Membership; SD), Nigel & Gill Hislop (GH) and about ten local members. Anthony French (AF) from Streets and Open Spaces (SOS) also attended.

Rebecca Jones, committee member for Friends of Cherry Hinton Brook (FCHB), volunteer with Queen Edith's Community Forum (QECF) and SOS volunteer at Nightingale Community Garden, was new to the FCHH meetings but had offered, via Facebook, to draft the minutes.

Apologies had been received from Michelle Bullivant, Emily Poyser (Secretary), Ian Simmons (Treasurer).

Chairs welcome and thanks

DT welcomed the local members and AF for attending.

Minutes of meeting 15 March 2017

Minutes were tabled and agreed as accurate (GH & SN). **Minutes for the July AGM were not available**.

Matters arising from the minutes

Matters arising were incorporated in the discussion with the main speaker and as AOB.

Treasurers report

The Treasurer had sent apologies. DT described the Group's finances as 'healthy'.

Membership

SD reported that membership was good, around 200 people and also people following the FCHH via Facebook. She apologised for not being able to e-mail members before this meeting due to technical/training issues, which would be resolved soon.

Events

SD reported that the Pets in The Park event would skip a year in 2018 to return in June 2019. The FCHH organisers would be seeking new charity partnership(s) to help with the organisation.

Attaching community events to the Jazz/Brass in the park events: in 2017, Cambridge Live organised two Concerts in the Park at CHH – in June and July. There are opportunities to attach one or more community-led events to these concerts. This would help any applications for Green Flag status (see below).

RJ reported that QECF had worked closely with Cambridge Live to programme for late August 2017 a new (brass band) concert at Nightingale Park: they promoted it and encouraged people to bring a picnic. They also organised a free 'Bring and Share' simple tea in the adjacent community garden, with an optional collection for the local hospice. This

was easy to do and a great success (>200 people attending).

Action: FCHH to investigate this for 2018. It could also be a fundraiser for a new interpretation board for Grimes Graves (see below).

Guest speaker: Anthony French (Streets and Open Spaces manager; AF), with Masterplan update

AF apologised for not having a large printed Masterplan document to share but it was 'somewhere in a cylinder in the Guildhall' after the move of their SOS offices recently.

- **Background and finances of Masterplan:** some years ago, the original proposed budget and scope for CHH/Park was ~£1M: with ~£400K from S106 (develop levy) contributions from the City Council to match ~£600K funding from a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) application. Following advice that a HLF application probably wouldn't have been successful (other parks in more deprived areas would be a higher priority for the Fund), the budget and scope were scaled back to ~£400K (which has some contingency for overspend). The S106 funding is largely for 'informal landscape work' and there are items that can't be funded, like new toilets, routine maintenance, play equipment and large building works.

About £170K have been spent so far ('back end of hall' dredging, reprofiling, tree work). Aims being to make the areas 'safe for all park users', including families, wheelchair users, and improvement of tree stock, mainly of which were ailing. There is some flexibility in the finances and masterplan, for example tree works that won't be done in the near future can release ~£20K.

An A3 coloured map and two A4 maps (all of tree positions) and a list of new trees were tabled and will be made available online.

DT thanked AF for his 'very comprehensive and helpful' talk and replies to questions. In A to Z order:

- **Benches:** about £20K in budget, to spend on about 20 benches (~£400 for a bench and ~£600 for the plinth and securing). Benches are on order now. Another memorial bench to be funded outside the S106 funding. Opportunity for FCHH to input ideas on the position of new benches – primary aim being to serve park users, secondary aim to be in good positions for the Folk Festival.

Action: AF/DF to arrange a time to walk the site looking for places for benches.

- **Front of Hall:** part of the Masterplan is to 'open up the views of the Hall' as an attractive and heritage building. There will be some removal of lesser trees (not the sequoias- see below) and especially some unattractive shrubs. There will be planting of 'decent trees'.

In the Spring, it is proposed to prepare, near the school, an area of annual or perennial **meadow**, which could have bulb under-planting. These have been championed by Guy Belcher the Biodiversity Officer and also the City councillors. They have been very well received across the City, including at Parkers Piece, which

has a similar 'park feel'. Eventually they will replace much of the traditional annual bedding schemes from the City Council.

RJ has experience of three years' of sown annual meadows and one year of sown perennial meadows at Nightingale Garden, where they are very popular indeed.

Sown Pictorial Meadows (a mix of native and garden varieties) can be in flower from June to November and this can be extended into the Spring if they are under-planted with bulbs. They require little maintenance (pulling of annual weeds like fat hen and thistles) and are a more sustainable type of amenity horticulture – and are great for pollinators and other insects too.

Action: FCHH help explain why the shrubs are being removed and also the benefits of meadow planting.

- **Gates:** the Front Hall gates need re-hanging (due to some damage) but are listed so planning takes longer (they will probably need to be sandblasted). The Conservation team are involved.

The sturdy manual gates that used to be in place are 'sitting in the Council yard'. AF proposes to replace the 'horrid mesh' with them and there are funds to do this. People at the meeting were very enthusiastic about this.

- **Giants Grave:** this is on City Council land as is managed by them, including by volunteers supervised by Guy Belcher and Vic Smith. There have been some weekend working parties in the area in the past few years too.

FCHH think it would be useful to decide which group takes a primary role to liaise with the Council over this area. It is important to FCHB due to it being the source of the Brook but FCHB have quite a full agenda already.

One immediate issue is that the interpretation board (Michelle Bullivant knows most about this) is now illegible and it would probably be best to remove it. AF isn't aware of any funding to replace it. An option could be for the two voluntary groups to fundraise together for this.

Action: DT (and SN) to contact Sue Wells at FCHB to discuss how to co-ordinate between the two groups and the council. The next FCHB Committee meeting will be in January 2018 but they communicate a lot by e-mail in between.

- **GreenFlag status for the park:** at recent Friends of Parks meetings (chaired by AF), FCHH people had heard about the Green Flag scheme. This is a national accreditation 'charter mark' (facilities, quality, community engagement etc), similar to Blue Flags for beaches. Criteria include facilities, signs and interpretation, community involvement.

SOS will probably apply in 2018 for Jesus Green and Christs Pieces they are 'close to

the standard... weaknesses are cluttered entrance ways, need for interpretation panels, not having so much community input or events'. They require a Management Plan (about 60 pages), structured, and for ~5 to 10 years and are a major project for the Council to assemble.

CHH/Park isn't in the SOS Green Flag schedule but AF will propose it, maybe from 2019: 'it is a key park in the City'. If it happens, SOS would aim for a shorter 10-page summary of the Plan to help communicate with park users.

The Green Flag assessors like to see a strong Friends group for parks (FCHH is good), two or more small community-led events using the park (like Pets in the Park). Obvious weakness of CHH would be the existing toilet facilities. Having an indoors community space would be very helpful.

- **Hammerhead (concrete by waterfall):** some of this will be reduced, might add markers like hopscotch.
- **Hedging:** plan to plant a new hedge around the compound to help reduce the visual impact of the railings. Either beech, privet or a mixed hedge. Will complement the new trees, which include lime. To be planted outside the railings with protection from any vandalism: 'should take quickly'.

Dawes Lane: some works planned for bulking up this section – 'full of ivy, which falls in the ditch' and the hedge 'needs bulking up'.

- **Lake vegetation:** has been an issue with the new planting – 'the ducks are eating it'. Guy Belcher has a plan to introduce some really large clumps of mature vegetation in the hope this might be more resistant to the ducks.
- **Making good:** there is a messy area (by tree 479) between the central area and the back entrance to the park that was damaged at a very wet Folk Festival many years ago. It need to be repaired and there is budget for this.
- **Pathworks:** in masterplan the aim is to create, as far as possible, a circular route, accessible to all. Much work is being done to redefine paths – some have subsurface only on them at present 'horizontal profile looks good', as they wait for orange sandstone top (in keeping with the nature of the park).

Some paths will be tarmacked such as those close to the Hall and around the cottage.

Areas for pathworks include (a) play area to Dawes Lane; (b) central gate to Dawes Lane; (c) front of vegetation to waterfront. It is not possible to do much resurfacing work in some areas due to possible damage to tree roots.

If the S106 contingency isn't spent, there might be funds for more pathworks.

- **Planting along the banks of the Brook:** A Melbourn Rd resident had planted along the bank of the Brook adjacent to her property 'it looked very nice' but the planting had been damaged/removed (by ?contractors). FCHH were unsure if the bank belongs to the property or the Council (Forest Rd residents have rights and responsibilities on their banks and half of the width of the brook).

Action: SD will forward the resident's e-mail to AF to investigate.

- **School tenants of the Hall:** due to the building work, there has been a lot of vehicle movements onto the site which have 'become excessive'. AF is talking with the contractors, who aim to be off site around Xmas (see AOB below too).

There is an opportunity for the school to work with the council to invest in the old council building in some way, which could potentially be a shared use space, including for community use.

- **Sundial:** there is a 2ft x 2ft curved sculpture, which used to be in another location, but is now in a very shady place. Some people at the meeting were unaware it was a sundial. SN suggested that while there were large machinery in the park, maybe it could be up-rooted and moved somewhere with more prospect of sun.

Action: AF to take a look at its current position and investigate possible new ones - and see if this could be funded within the existing budget.

- **Tree works:** the tree team have been working very hard on this project 'excited to have a large budget to work with'.

The sequoia trees by the school will eventually cause problems but the arborists decided there is 'no rush to remove them'. Some lesser Thuja trees will be removed to help with the visual impact of the sequoias.

There will be more work in Winter 2017/18 – some felling of dead or damaged trees (such as some of the beech trees in main car park, 'which have pathogens and are unstable').

There is a plan to plant around 51 new trees, including around the compound. The choice of tree has been to reinforce the arboretum-style of the park, which has a very wide range of trees already, in contrast to other open spaces in Cambridge, which tend to have long avenues of similar stock. All new trees will have sturdy staking and protection.

The budget (in some cases £2K per tree) allows substantial sized trees to be planted.

Conifer tree near dipping platform: this has split into two and will be removed. To be replaced by another tree (probably a wingnut).

Action: FCHH to help explain why trees are being felled, especially some of the larger

trees that have the most visual impact. AF to forward to FCHH any lists of trees to be felled.

- **Wayfinding by trees project:** there is the opportunity to use the existing and new trees for wayfinding and education, including using phone apps. Staff are starting to investigate this, including working with other local authorities. FCHH said local schools were very enthusiastic in general about using the park for education purposes.
- **Next steps:** Most of these works will be completed by the Spring so a Summer update would be most useful. It could be good to have a 'Committee walk' around at the end of the bulk of these works.

AF thinks the contingency won't be spent so there will be opportunities for other 'informal landscape work' not yet detailed in the Masterplan.

Action: FCCH to continue to liaise with SOS about masterplan works, especially when things will happen so they can warn people about 'what and when'. FCCH to inform AF of the July meeting date so he can aim to attend to update on works and discuss new ideas, not as a main speaker but as an agenda item.

Any Other Business (AOB)

- **New restrictions on dog walking** – signs have been up for some time but new areas designated for 'dogs on leads' are causing some anxiety with dog walkers – they are unsure where the designated areas start and end.

Action: SD to contact the dog team at SOS (Sharon has changed job) to let them know – maybe the signage can be modified.

- **Wildlife (and some 'rescues')**: two swans are in residence in the park, and the goose that has been there for 10– 5 years is a female. Various fish are in the Lake, including some carp and at least one goldfish. People have been seen tipping buckets of frogs into the lake/Brook. At least one (dead) eel has been spotted. When the lake was dredged in 1960s, a pike was found (but they eat everything else).
- **Collaboration with Cambridge International School** (tenants of the Hall): Dorey Robertson introduced herself – she is new to the School but was attending in place of the Principal. The School are very keen to join the FCHH and work with them. FCHH said they would be 'most welcome'.

Dorey apologised for the impact of the building work on the Park – the works had over-run due to asbestos being found in the cellar and also a broken water pipe. They expected to be finished by the end of the year, with the whole school moving back in January 2018. The School will have, at least, an open morning and will invite park users to see the restoration and building works to the Hall.

RJ asked if the school held any summer fetes etc. Dorey didn't know but thought it

was a great idea and could be done in collaboration with the FCHH.

Action: FCHH to work with the School on suitable community activities and to promote any School events of interest to park users.

Joint fundraising activities could be to develop a map of the park (including the Hall) for at least one large sign at key points in the park (entrances) and maybe some smaller 'leaflets' for orienting or downloading. The School also recognises issues with people getting lost around the site.

Dates of next meetings: TBA, probably March, July and November 2018.