

Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall Minutes, 7.30 pm, Wednesday, 20 November 2013
Cherry Hinton Village Church Centre, Colville Road, Cherry Hinton

Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall is a group that is concerned about the usage, environment, welfare and future of the Cherry Hinton Hall grounds for the benefit of those who use it

14 people were in attendance at the Village Centre, Cherry Hinton. There were apologies from Mark Ashton, Robert Dryden, Cindy Doxford, Jane Martin and Emily Poyser.

1. Welcome

David Taylor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the 18 September meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed. *Matters arising:*

- Sandra Day reported that private donations to the Ken Woolard Memorial had reached £2,500.
- Anthony French said he would chase Simon Bunn for his report and also whether the end of the pipe running from the back pond to the brook has been successfully located.

3. Guest Speaker: Anthony French, Cambridge City Council: “The Work of the Open Spaces Team Across the City”

Anthony French began by saying he has spoken now every year to a Friends of Cherry Hinton Hall meeting, but on this occasion rather than just provide an update on master plan progress and other works, would like to tell us something of his other activities and that of the *Open Spaces* team at the City Council.

Background and Current Position

Anthony has been at the City Council for 16 years, following completion of HND and Degree studies at Writtle College. Although the roles have changed thanks to countless restructures, Anthony has always been part of Cambridge City Council’s *Open Spaces* team. Following the most recent reorganisation, he is now *Open Space Development Officer*, with responsibility for the delivery of Section 106 projects (where funding is derived from contributions from housing and other developments) across the City. This, of course, includes delivery of the Cherry Hinton Hall master plan.

Open Spaces Team

The team is involved in a wide range of activities. For example, this week Anthony has been overseeing the delivery of a contract for the 76,000 seasonal bedding plants across the city, including the design of bed layouts such as Christ’s Pieces [today’s work was one day of a two-day stint planting 100,000 daffodils!]. In addition to the current autumn design and planting including bulbs such as tulips and daffodils there is also a second spring planting season too, including the hanging baskets along Cherry Hinton High Street (plus Mill Road and Chesterton

High Street). These seasonal bedding plants, etc., were of course once grown in-house at the Council's plant nursery in Cherry Hinton Hall grounds. However, the City Council now use the plant nursery at Sommersham.

Other activities the *Open Spaces* team cover include the contract for herbicide weed spraying (twice yearly) for all kerbsides across the city (quite a few square miles). Horticulturally, there is an ongoing general replanting and maintenance programme (approx. £15,000 per year); with bulk mulching done to suppress weed growth (replanting usually costs are usually £25-£30 per square metre). Meanwhile the *Open Spaces* team also acts as advisors (with their specialist knowledge) to other Council departments such as Planning, Highways, etc.

But the above sort of activities only represents about half of the *Open Spaces* team's work. There is another 50% on top of this which is concerned with the events programme for all the City Council's open spaces. *Open Spaces* is required to give permission for all events each year e.g. Cherry Hinton Festival on the Rec, the theatre on Cherry Hinton Hall, etc., including all commercial activities. (NB If applicants are from the charitable sector, the aim is only to recoup the Council's costs in helping stage an event; commercial fees can incur a charge of perhaps £500 / day). At the moment there are about 80 events per year to assess, negotiate and sign-off on. The process includes ward member approval, but *Open Spaces* can turn down applications if they wish per-se, as they have done for monster trucks and for camel riding.

Other *Open Spaces* responsibilities include the grazing of cattle on Coldham's, Midsummer and Stourbridge Commons. There needs to be enough time for the cows to graze successfully, and also allow for events later on in the year. The grazing fee is £42 per cow per year. The arrangement is beneficial to both parties as the grazing helps keep the Commons in good shape. There also has to be a 'Pinder Service' in place - an out of hours service for responding to animals which have escaped from the Commons or that have become stuck in the river.

Open Spaces also have responsibility for various bowls clubs such as the one on Christ's Pieces. However, the bowls club pays for the maintenance. NB a little-known fact – at any time of day there should always be at least one bowls club open to the general public to use for free!

Friends Groups: Ten years ago there were none; now there are 10 (Mill Road Cemetery, Stourbridge Common, Histon Road Cemetery, Jesus Green, Midsummer Common, Coldham's Common, Cherry Hinton Brook, Nightingale Avenue, Coleridge Rec, plus FCHH). We have one dedicated officer looking after the various Friends groups – Sarah Tovell. The various groups have very different requirements; FCHH is a nice one as it tends to look after itself, whereas some are very labour-intensive.

The new *Open Space Development Officer* role has plenty going on as there are quite a number of large development sites across the city generating S106 monies. For instance, Coleridge Rec has just been awarded £289K for work including new tennis courts, a MUGA, paths, landscaping, etc. S106 money has to be spent in the way it has been specified in the planning application by a certain time, otherwise

it has to be returned to the developer. Anthony now has 4 staff to manage as part of this role, one being the person in the role he previous undertook.

LAPs (Local Areas for Play), LEAPs (Local Equipped Area for Play) and NEAPs (Neighbourhood Equipped Area of Play) are the terms used to describe the various S106 requirements which result from developments of a particular size or type. It is important that the *Open Space Development Officer* liaises with the developer and the Planning Department, as we don't want high-maintenance items appearing (there is a 1 year snagging period, then the local authority takes over with an allocated 12-year maintenance sum presented to them, after which any maintenance is solely the responsibility of the council). An example here is wildflower meadows, which can be quite costly to maintain.

Questions

Barbara Gordon asked what Anthony will be doing about the new railway station forecourt, which looks sadly devoid of greenery. Anthony replied that he was taking a look at the plans to see whether the design contained sufficient planting.

What about trees, is this an *Open Spaces* remit? Anthony replied that there is also a City Council Tree Team (and legal designations such a tree preservation orders have to be observed). Safety is also a very big part of the Tree Team's work. Trees that *Open Spaces* put in can be quite expensive – a small one is £75; a very large one such as recently planted in Christ's Pieces is £3,000. Each will need watering for the first 2 years, so this cost is usually double by the time they are fully-established (those with green gaiters are visited by a contractor every ten days over summer).

Stuart asked how FCCH compared to other groups. Anthony replied that it's important to remember that Cherry Hinton Hall is a 'destination park' as well as a 'local park' – and we tend to be the Council's 'eyes and ears'. We have also been a great help with the master plan (which has come a long way), we have a large membership which helps in presenting 'a collective view'. Yes, FCHH is very useful and important.

4. Master Plan Update , Maintenance Issues

Anthony said that the new paths look as though they have gone in well for the Council's £75k spend, and are in keeping with the master plan. Now the focus is on the second-stage of master plan delivery, where we need to bring in the external funding. The City Council has decided not to pursue a *Heritage Lottery Fund* bid, as these are only forthcoming for parks in pretty-poor shape. As regards delivery cost, there was a £460k sum originally agreed at Committee level. We are not going to have this sort of sum available, so we need to prioritise what we spend any money on (a new toilet block could eat up ½ of the £460k). We therefore need feedback from FCHH and other stakeholders as to what parts of the master plan we undertake next.

Stuart suggested a table should be presented with each discrete item listed along with the sum it would cost to deliver. We could then take this to another stakeholder meeting, perhaps facilitated by Phil Back, the consultant who helped

to get the original master plan drawn up. It was agreed that this was a useful way of moving things forward.

Cycle Racks

Anthony reported that there has been a small amount of money allocated for cycle parking in the Hall grounds. Anthony met with some of the FCHH Committee on site recently to discuss possible locations for temporary racks, to see if any of these proved popular, and a number were identified. We also identified a site in the car park – a space the size of a car parking space next to the wooden statue which can't be used for cars and is therefore ideal for a permanent cycle rack.

New Play Equipment

Sandra reported that Declan O'Halloran from the City Council had taken away some photos from the winners of the dog photograph competition to use as headshots for new 'No Dogs' signs for the play area. The swings are to be replaced, and the new ones re-sited. Also some new equipment is due to be put in – some sort of little house, 4 'boards' for playing music which will be useful for the visually-impaired and those with learning disabilities.

Grant Bids for Equipment and Insurance

Ian Simmons reported that today the FCHH account had been credited with £600 as a result of our bid for a Community Development Grant from the City Council. This will be used for 2 sets waders for stream clearance, a strimmer plus safety training and safety equipment, plus some gardening equipment. Once someone has completed the training they will be able to undertake maintenance work unsupervised by council staff. We must provide monitoring information to the Grants Department and an annual report on our activities.

5. AOB

- It was decided to leave the car park survey until the spring, when the weather and light would be better.
- Should we snap the padlock shut on the gate if it is open? Anthony replied that yes, we could. There is a key in a box by the gate which Council staff can use.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting 7.30 pm, Wednesday, 15 January, at Cherry Hinton Village Centre. The guest speaker is FCHH Chair, David Taylor, who will present '*Women's Roles and Achievements in Aviation*'.