

**BRIDGE END GARDENS WORKING PARTY held at COUNCIL OFFICES,
LONDON ROAD and later at BRIDGE END GARDENS SAFFRON
WALDEN at 4.30pm on 19 AUGUST 2002**

Present: - Councillor D J Morson – Chairman
Councillors Mrs D Cornell and D M Miller

Officers in attendance: - J Bosworth, Miss S Chapman, A Forrow and
J Mitchell.

BEG178 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R C Dean.

BEG179 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2002 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

BEG180 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Stone Bench

It was understood that the stone bench had been installed and Members would have the opportunity to inspect it later in the meeting.

(ii) Bye-laws

The issue of dog fouling in the area known as Borough Meadows had been raised at Saffron Walden Town Council. The Animal Warden was aware of an issue and the Working Party agreed to await her comments.

Metal signs publicising the bye-laws were being prepared.

(iii) Memorials

The Local Plan and Conservation Manager confirmed that the restoration plan identified several suitable locations for Victorian seating which would be appropriate as memorials, subject to them being historically appropriate. Councillors Mrs Cornell and Miller agreed to pursue the matter with an individual who was known to be interested.

BEG181 TASK FORCE

The Head of Planning and Building Surveying presented a report setting out the background to and outcomes of an independent investigation into issues

relating to the Bridge End Gardens Task Force. Members noted the action taken.

BEG182 LONG TERM MAINTENANCE COMMITMENTS

The Head of Planning and Building Surveying presented a report outlining the likely revenue implications for the Council of its long-term commitment to the maintenance of the Gardens if the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid were successful. Under the terms of the lease, this commitment could last until the year 2036. It had been accepted that a higher level of maintenance would be required than at present. Full time staffing requirements were likely to remain at the present level, and there could be a need for some additional seasonal input. Future maintenance costs were unlikely to change materially, although some budgeted funding would cease before the end of the financial year. Options for external funding would be explored but, even without restoration, there would be unavoidable revenue repercussions for the Council.

It was noted that the Local Plan and Conservation Manager had stressed to the consultants the need to keep maintenance costs to the minimum. Members also noted that the Council was obliged to put and keep the structures in the Gardens in good repair. Some structures were in urgent need of repair now. The cost of this work was estimated to exceed £200,000, so that a successful HLF bid was the only realistic hope the Council had of funding the necessary work.

Members commented that they had feared that future maintenance costs would be higher than now seemed likely. Whilst they recognised the financial pressures on the Council, they reaffirmed their support for this important, high profile project. The Community and Leisure Committee would be considering the same report on 3 September and the Chairman agreed to attend that meeting.

RECOMMENDED that the Community and Leisure Committee reaffirms its support for the Bridge End Gardens Restoration project and makes appropriate provision in its draft revenue estimates.

BEG183 EXTERNAL FUNDING UPDATE

The Local Plan and Conservation Manager reported that no additional funds had been forthcoming of which the Working Party was not already aware. However, he had secured an easement across adjoining land which would allow electricity to be connected to the Gardens shortly.

BEG184 PROGRESS WITH HLF BID

The Local Plan and Conservation Manager had started to prepare the Stage 2 bid and would be discussing it further with the HLF Monitor on 5 September.

There should be no difficulty in meeting the deadline for submission of the bid at the end of November 2002. Members thanked the Local Plan and Conservation Manager for his continued efforts.

BEG185 FEEDBACK FROM MEETING WITH FRIENDS

The Local Plan and Conservation Manager had attended a meeting with the Friends at which he had explained the plans and costings. The Friends wished to take responsibility for the beds at the Castle Street end of the Gardens. These were now ready for planting and Councillor Morson undertook to advise Charles Golding, the Friends' Chairman, of the situation. The Working Party recalled that the Friends also wished to be involved in planting the roseroy and the Local Plan and Conservation Officer advised that he would be ordering the roses for planting this season..

The Friends had agreed that it was too early to put on another publicity day.

BEG186 NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held at the London Road Offices at 4.30pm on 16 September 2002.

At this point the meeting adjourned to Bridge End Gardens

BEG187 MANAGEMENT AND HISTORIC PLANTING PLANS

The Local Plan and Conservation Manager reported that it had been proposed that a flood relief pond be created to the Southeast of the balustraded wall of the Dutch Garden. He had written to 33 Engineers Regiment asking if it would be willing to help with the work and was awaiting a reply. The Council's Engineering and Safety Officer was preparing plans which would be sent to the Saffron Walden Town Council for comment.

Members then inspected the stone bench donated by Councillor Miller and agreed that it was a fitting memorial.

The Local Plan and Conservation Manager explained that, except for the former kitchen garden and the Dutch Garden, the restoration plan took as its starting point an 1877 Ordnance Survey map. The proposals for the Dutch Garden were based on a plan dating from 1912. He outlined the proposals for all parts of the Gardens. Members were enthusiastic about the plans and agreed that, once the project was concluded, it would be of considerable significance and likely to attract many additional visitors to the town. Some proposals, such as the reduction in the height of some trees, were likely to be controversial in the views of some local people, and publicity would be important in gaining acceptance for them.

Members noted that, if the present opportunity to repair and restore the structures in the Gardens were not taken, they would deteriorate further and the drain on the Council's resources would be worse. In relation to maintenance, it would be important to obtain appropriate machinery.

The Working Party again thanked the Local Plan and Conservation Manager for his hard work on the project.

The meeting ended at 6.10pm.