

**BRIDGE END GARDENS TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 4.30 pm on 20 OCTOBER 2003**

Present:- Councillor D J Morson – Chairman.
Councillors R P Chambers and V Pedder.

Officers in attendance:- J Bosworth, S McLagan and M T Purkiss.

BEG22 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A J Ketteridge and B M Hughes.

BEG23 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2003 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

BEG24 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Flooding

The Project Manager confirmed that 33 Engineer Regiment would not be able to carry out the work to the defensive ditch. Accordingly, two quotations had been obtained for this work and the details were being discussed with Saffron Walden Town Council as part of the land was within their ownership.

(ii) Staffing

The Project Manager reported that, with the approval of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the gardener had been seconded from Contract Services until 31 January 2004.

(iii) Felling of Trees

The Project Manager reported that he had been able to negotiate a lower sum to that originally received.

(iv) Byelaws

It was noted that two of the signs were now in position and there had been a reduction in the number of people walking dogs in the Gardens.

BEG25 PROGRESS REPORT

The Project Manager said that progress had been reported regularly in the Bridge End Gardens newsletters. He said that priority had recently been given to clearing the Bridge Street path. This work had now been completed and 60 cubic metres of debris and roots had been removed.

He reported that it had been found that part of the remaining wall adjacent to The Slade was in a dangerous condition. A proposal was being drawn up for the repair of the wall and this would be submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund with a request that it be funded from the contingency sum. Progress would be reported to the next meeting of the Task Group. He added that since the security cameras had been installed there had only been one incident of minor vandalism in the past seven weeks. Councillor Chambers also said that he would be encouraging the Police to provide additional patrols in the area, particularly at vulnerable times.

BEG26 HEALTH AND SAFETY

Prior to the meeting Councillor Pedder had asked the Project Manager to address a health and safety issue concerning black nightshade and woody nightshade that were growing in parts of the Garden. She was particularly concerned at the potential danger with school visits, particularly popular in relation to the maze area. The Project Manager reported that a concerted effort had been made to remove as many of the offending plants as possible throughout the Gardens. Additionally the maze had been trimmed and nettles had also been removed from its internal paths.

BEG27 FEEDBACK FROM MEETING WITH FRIENDS

The Chairman reported on the last meeting of the Friends of Bridge End Gardens and the last AGM. He said that some concern had been expressed that the focus of work appeared to be on restoration rather than maintenance and the Friends felt that this should not be neglected. The Project Manager referred to the current staffing situation and said that restoration was the key issue. He accepted that maintenance was not to the high standard which he would like to see in the future. The Chairman said that the Friends had also offered to assist in the preparation of a brochure promoting the Gardens and the Project Manager would speak to the Friends concerning this issue. The Chairman also referred to the positive upbeat mood apparent at the Friend's AGM on 29 September which he and the Project Manager had attended.

BEG28 PERFORMANCES IN THE GARDENS

The Chairman reported that following the production of "Much Ado About Nothing" he had spoken to the production team who had expressed an interest in putting on a production of a Shakespeare play in the Gardens. Whilst this would not be possible until after the completion of the restoration project, the production team had pencilled in a date of July 2005 and the matter would be kept under review.

BEG29 NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Monday 22 December at 4.30 pm at the Council Offices, Saffron Walden.

BEG30 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that the business to be transacted involved the likely disclosure of Exempt Information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

BEG31 STAFFING

The Project Manager outlined a suggested proposal for future staffing arrangements in the Gardens. Whilst Members were generally supportive of the principle, the Chairman said that a full report together with costings would be required prior to making a decision. It was agreed that this matter would be considered at the next meeting of the Task Group.

The meeting ended at 5.20 pm.