

**BRIDGE END GARDENS TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES
LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 4.30 pm on 22 DECEMBER 2003**

Present:- Councillor D J Morson – Chairman.
Councillors B M Hughes and V Pedder.

Officers in attendance:- J Bosworth, R Kirmani and S McLagan.

BEG32 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R P Chambers and A J Ketteridge.

BEG33 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2003 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

BEG34 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Flooding

The Project Manager reported that the matter had been discussed with Officers from the Saffron Walden Town Council. Work on the defensive ditch would start in the New Year. Planning permission would not be required for the revised scheme and spoils could be spread on site. It was agreed that Officers to report back the details at the next meeting.

(ii) Staffing

The Project Manager reported that, with the approval of the Heritage Lottery Fund, a gardener had been seconded from Contract Services until 31 January 2004. A detailed report on staffing issues would be discussed in Part 11 of the Agenda.

(iv) Byelaws

It was noted that all three byelaws signs were now in position and there had been a reduction in the number of people walking dogs in the Gardens. No new incidences of vandalism had been reported.

(v) Progress Report

The Chairman said that the Bridge End Garden Newsletter reporting the progress of the restoration work was greatly appreciated by many people who had complimented it.

The Project Manager reported that a damaged wall in Bridge Street path had been removed in part and debris had been removed. A large notice had been put up advising of potential danger.

Security cameras were effective, as no further incidences of vandalism had been reported. The Police were regularly patrolling the area.

It was agreed that Councillor Chambers be thanked for his efforts to encourage Police patrolling the area.

BEG35 PROGRESS REPORT

The Project Manager said that progress had been reported regularly in the Bridge End Garden newsletters. He further reported that the Dutch Garden and Wilderness Area had been restored and priority had recently been given to clearing the Bridge Street path and Castle Street path. This work had now been completed and very large quantities of debris and roots had been removed.

He reported that extensive work had been carried out at the maze and all paths had been cleared. During the restoration process a beautiful mosaic tile pattern had been found. The Chairman suggested that a postcard could be designed based on this and that it could be used for publicity purposes.

BEG36 HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Project Manager reported that further to Councillor Pedder's concern regarding black nightshade and woody nightshade, a concerted effort had been made to remove as many of the offending plants as possible throughout the Gardens. He had identified some loose branches so had closed the relevant area while these were removed. Health and Safety issues were taken seriously. The Head of Community & Leisure had advised that the Project Manager was to undertake further Health and Safety training and was currently reviewing the Risk Assessments for the Gardens.

BEG37 FEEDBACK FROM MEETING WITH FRIENDS

The Chairman reported that there had been no further meetings with the Friends of Bridge End Gardens since the last AGM. The Project Manager said that he met Mr Goldie who was pleased with the progress of restoration and maintenance works.

BEG38 NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting will be held on Monday 16 February 2004 at 4.30 pm at the Council Offices, Saffron Walden.

BEG39 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) NEW INITIATIVES

The Project Manager reported that the officers had negotiated with Harlow College and Writtle College, and they had agreed to train young persons in Horticulture from September 2004. Harlow College would provide general education facilities and the District Council would provide some equipment and tools.

The Project Manager further reported that he had a discussion with an officer, a trained horticulturalist, from the Cambridge City Council regarding various options that were being explored.

The Chairman suggested that officers discuss possibilities of including Bridge End Gardens as a tourist attraction in association with the promotion of Cambridge tourist attractions. A documentary regarding Bridge End Gardens would be televised by the BBC at 8.00pm on 9 January 2004.

The Members noted various initiatives explored by the officers to recruit trained horticulturalists to be employed at the Gardens and supported their efforts.

BEG40

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and 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.

BEG41

STAFFING

Members discussed the report on restructuring of staff at Bridge End Gardens. Officers updated the financial data set out in paragraph 17, the effects of which was to achieve a reduced saving of £1700.

In view of changed circumstances brought about by the dissolution of the Environmental Task Force and a significant decline in the number of other placements, Members agreed that the post of the Gardener/Environmental Task Force Supervisor was no longer required. The Chairman requested that the post holder be thanked for his services.

Members also noted the transfer of Gardner A, who is currently employed by Service Team until 31 December 2003, to UDC with from 1 January 2004. In such cases there was an obligation to take on the contractor's employee when the work would be taken back in house.

Members agreed the appointment of Gardener 2 on a temporary basis for 12 months.

Members agreed the purchase of essential equipment, identified in the Appendix to the Officer's report, the estimated value of which was £6,000.

RECOMMENDATION to the Community and Leisure Services Committee that

1. the post of Gardener/Environmental Task Force Supervisor be made redundant and the Council's Redeployment's Policy (PPN 26) and Redundancy Policy (PPN 24) be entered into with effect from 7 January 2004;
2. the one-off Redundancy costs be met from reserves;
3. retrospective recognition be given to the transfer of Gardner A to the post of Gardner 1 with effect from 1 January 2004;
4. a temporary Contract for the post of Gardener 2 be agreed until 31 December 2004;
5. equipment set out in the Appendix, limited to a total cost of £6,000 be purchased from the existing 2004/05 budget.

The meeting ended at 5.30 pm.