

**Red House Park Friends Group
Annual General Meeting
1st September 2005
Minutes**

Sarah Carter, Chair, opened the meeting at 7.15pm.

1. Present

Sarah Carter, Chair William Gunn, Vice-Chair Jenny Hale, Secretary Kay Clash Jason Cross Dawn & Glen Williams Jean Jones Helga Lutz, SMBC Urban Parks Manager Ray Wheatley Ian Carroll Cllr Sadie Smith Cllr Mary Wilson Cllr Tony Ward	Sue Clorley Selwyn Hayward Jackie Ward Guy Hale Amanda & Charlotte Morris Marie Morris Beryl McGibbon Camilla Horton Christine Horton Sonia Vaughan Margaret Macklin Sue Willetts
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2. Apologies

Jill Fisher
Carol Szymura

3. Election of Chair

Sarah Carter was nominated and re-elected as Chair.

4. Election of Vice-Chair

William Gunn was nominated and re-elected as Vice-Chair.

5. Election of Secretary

SC advised the committee that JH would be looking to stand down in the near future but would continue as Secretary until another nominee could be found. SC asked if there were any other nominations – there were none. Jenny Hale was nominated and re-elected as Secretary. SC asked for volunteers to assist occasionally with the role of Secretary – JC and CH offered their help.

6. Election of Treasurer

Due to personal circumstances Jill Fisher had resigned as Treasurer. Many thanks to Jill for all her assistance and time given to the Friends of Red House Park. We hope to see her again in the future. Guy Hale was nominated and elected as Treasurer.

SC discussed how group should work in future. She advised that anyone who wished to be a committee member was required to attend as many meetings as possible, on a regular basis and must be prepared to get involved in the groups activities, giving assistance when required. Anyone who does not wish to take on this responsibility and who does not want to attend regularly should advise SC or JH and their names will be removed from the automatic mailing list. All those present accepted.

7. Lakes Restoration Project

SC introduced Helga Lutz, Urban Parks Manager for SMBC. HL confirmed that the project work had begun. Both pools will be drained, the silt removed and pools replanted to prevent resiltting. SMBC had previously commissioned a feasibility report, ecological survey for wildlife use and a ROSPA report considering Health & Safety around the pools. The contract had then been tendered and HFN had won the contract. HFN has done other work for the council at a pool in Smethwick and had reportedly done a good job.

The top pool will be drained first, with the water inlet being diverted. Water will remain in the lower pool for the wildlife. The silt will be excavated and deposited at the top of the embankment at the far end of the top pool (Longleat/ Wilderness Lane). HL confirmed that there was no contamination in the silt. There will also be some tree work around both pools. SC advised that a tree survey had been carried out and the work identified. HL advised that the tree surgery was currently being costed and the council needed to identify where the funding would come from. Tree surgery is classed as maintenance work and funding therefore, has to be found from the councils budget – not from B106 funds or the lakes restoration project fund. Cllr SS asked how and where water would be drained. The water from the top pool will be pumped into the lower pool, with the excess water draining from the lower outlet with the use of extra pipes.

IC wanted to know whether the top pool would be refilled quickly and not just left to fill naturally from the inlet pipe. HL confirmed that water would be pumped back into the pool. She also advised that the pumping out of the water would be running 24 hours a day until the pools were empty and therefore, some noise disturbance may be experienced. IC asked if the raft in top pool would be removed, whether shallow areas would be left for birds to stand on and if rubbish such as house bricks will be removed from site to prevent use as missiles. HL confirmed:- raft will be removed; if any storage required then Hill Lane can be used; the silt will just be scooped out, all to one level, then they will look at any landscaping possibilities; will not be able to remove rubbish straight away as it will be wet and muddy – once it starts drying out any dangerous objects will be removed. IC suggested that it would not be a good idea to restock the pool with fish due to poaching– HL confirmed there were no plans to do so. If there are any problems with the swans the council will contact IC for assistance. The work area will be fenced off but there will be no fencing as part of the final landscaping.

HL hopes that the desilting will be completed by the end of October and all work finished by Christmas (weather permitting).

8. New Toddler Play Area

The consultation, which has been displayed at Jumpin' Jacks for the last 2 months, had been collected and handed to HL for evaluation. If the results are clear cut it will be handed over to the architect, if not the Friends will be consulted for discussion. Margaret Foster will be the architect for SMBC (also in charge of lakes restoration). HL confirmed that the Play Area should be finished by the end of March 2006. SC advised that we should have the roundabout suitable for disabled children / pushchairs, irrespective of the consultation results – all agreed. MMorris, a parent of 2 children, reiterated opinions voiced in previous meetings, that Red House Park is the worst park for miles around as far as play equipment is concerned. The play equipment in the 8 – 14 year olds area is dangerous and insufficient. She has to travel outside the borough to use parks with decent play equipment – none of which have direct bus links, therefore having to use a car to travel. JJ echoed these comments. HL confirmed that SMBC are aware of Friends feelings as issues have been raised in several previous meetings. SV pointed out that once you have toddlers and their parents coming into the

park they will continue to use the park for many years to come. MM also raised the issue of toilet facilities, saying it was a disgrace that a park the size of RHP had no toilets. RW pointed out that all boroughs have their 'special' parks (eg Walsall's Arboretum) and RHP could not expect to have facilities to match. HL pointed out that Sandwell has Dartmouth Park and therefore, residents do not have to travel outside of the borough to use special equipment. RW also pointed out that the budget for the Parks Dept has been cut year after year and it's only now that the situation with graffiti and vandalism getting so bad that people are sitting up and taking notice. The grounds staff can only do so much within the budget available. HL said that having had equipment for older children installed first should prevent the new equipment for the younger children being vandalised. SC pointed out to those present that the point of the Friends was to make sure local people got what they wanted and that the Friends group needs more members to start getting involved and helping out – specifically with funding opportunities. The more people who are prepared to assist the more chance the Friends have of getting things done. Cllr SS advised that she had received several emails from residents saying that they were very pleased that they were finally being advised of what was going on with the park and being asked for their opinions, through the work the Friends were doing.

9. Multi Use Games Area (MUGA)

HL explained that the MUGA could be used by any age range, although it was generally used by 11 – 20 year olds. Its uses include football, cricket, basketball, etc. The council have applied for several grants to fund the project but unfortunately are still £10k short. They applied for one of £50k and were awarded £15k, one for £30k and awarded £15k, and £33k from the B106 fund. They will continue to apply for funds to meet the shortfall but should they be unsuccessful they may just have to complete provisional work until more money can be found. HL is hoping that the work will be completed by the end of March 2006. HL asked for groups thoughts on the location and gave 3 options:- old play area; to the left of the old play area (with the House behind you) and; further over towards Newton Rd (where craft stalls were on Fun Day). HL did not favour the old play area due to the extra cost of removing the tarmac. GW pointed out that the chosen area need to be as flat as possible. SC wanted to know if we could use the Bowling Green. HL advised that the MUGA needs to be 30 metres away from housing. JJ thought that the old play area had been identified for a skate board area. JH thought the overall look of the park should be taken into consideration before deciding. Cllr SS asked if there would be lighting – HL confirmed not. MMacklin thought it might spoil the park. GW stressed that we need as many resources as possible. Cllr TW thought we were in real danger of spoiling the look of the park and suggested that people go to Yew Tree to see the MUGA there before making any decisions, as the one there was an eye sore. SC suggested extending the tennis courts down to replace the Bowling Green and placing the MUGA at the other end, on the court nearest the House. This would keep all the play equipment together. HL pointed out that it would still need to be 30m away from the nearest house, the cost would greatly increase and we couldn't opt to lose a tennis court as they were in constant use. The proximity to the Hill Lane street lighting would also probably extend the usage time, which residents may object to and although there are now gates on the park, the lack of fencing would not prevent entry. HL agreed to bring pictures of a MUGA to next meeting for all to see. Friends need to make decision by next meeting. MW requested litterbins for new MUGA.

10. Update On Red House

- SC confirmed that 1000 signatures had been gathered on petition to save the House. Tony Lewis has loaded an on-line petition for anyone to sign via the Internet.
- SC had requested that the Great Barr Library be moved into the House, however, this is highly unlikely to happen. Cllr TW reported that Bob Baden, SMBC, had said there were no plans to pull down the House but TW advised Friends to expect the worst, trust no one and keep up the fight. If we go about it in the right way we could win the battle.
- GW reported that pictures of this years Fun Day were still not online. JH to chase.
- SC had met with Tom Watson MP to discuss situation with Red House – he was fully behind the Friends.

11. Any Other Business

- JH reported that a new notice board for the main Newton Road entrance will be donated by local businessman. Plans are in the making.
- SC advised that Friends need to keep £1k from all the money we have made to fund the next Fun Day. Any money left could be used to have something made for park with Friends name on it, to show local residents that we are putting the money raised to good use.
- KC asked if there was any news about improving the tennis courts. No news about the grant but SC had been in contact with a local resident who was keen to start a tennis club. SC to take further.
- WG wants the 'pump house' demolished. Apparently the building is derelict and used as a drug den. WG advised that he had looked into the costs of demolishing some time ago and the estimates were only £500. WG suggested that we could even get rid of the rubble underneath the silt removed from the lakes, lowering the cost of the work. HL will look into it.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was set for Monday 17th October 2005, Hill Lane, at the slightly earlier time of 7pm.