

Red House Park Friends Group

6th February 2006

Meeting Notes

William Gunn, Vice Chair, opened the meeting at 7.00 p.m.

1. Present

William Gunn, Vice-Chair Jenny Hale, Secretary Kay Clash Jason Cross Dawn & Glen Williams Ray Wheatley Steve West Jean Jones Sue Willets	Jackie Ward Christine Horton John & Kate Causer Sonia Vaughan Cllr Tony Ward Paul Yourell John Corbett Mandy & Charlotte Matthews Marie Morris
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2. Apologies

Sarah Carter, Chair Guy Hale, Treasurer Helga Lutz, SMBC Urban Parks Manager Steve Robinson, SMBC	Beryl McGibbon Mrs Gorton Ian Carroll Stephanie Page Paul Moore
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3. Fun Day

- Stilt Walker and Balloons agreed on for day, at £150.
- JH had looked into Donkey Rides but Dunton Stables were asking £300 arrangement fee, £2 per ride with only 10% return to Friends. Group agreed to book only if there were funds remaining after everything else booked.
- PM hadn't been able to arrange Samuri Suits or Five-a-side. JH to enquire at Dartmouth High School to see if they could organise a football competition.

4. Probation Service

Sandwell MBC had agreed that the Probation Service would provide the manpower to clear the Copse. The P.S. have done other work for the council (refer to Martin Brayford, Town Manager, Oldbury & Tipton) to a high standard. JCross raised issue of the waste disposal after work completed. RW advised that a chipping machine would not be necessary as the waste can be laid on ground to decompose naturally. RW confirmed that those chosen to do the work were given careful consideration and there would be 1 supervisor to every 3 probationers. The work would be done over several days, with only 2-3 days per week. It will be at least 2 months before the work will commence.

5. Bird Boxes

SWest advised that the Ground Care team (SMBC) would provide the manpower to install the bird boxes in the park and Steve Robinson would be in contact to confirm the date. Dartmouth High School had made the bird boxes with wood donated to the group by The Rotary Club, at half price from Great Barr Sawmills.

6. Toddler Play Area

- At the last meeting the group chose the plan which meant *not* losing the shrubbery and brought the play area further into the playing field. SMBC, however, later decided that this choice could not be accommodated because they could not afford to lose any more of the cricket outfield and the plans were put on hold. SC, JH and JC then met with SWest and the architect from SMBC to view the new revised plans for the Toddler Play Area. The new area will incorporate 3 of the cherry trees within the fenced area, the lower shrubs being removed and a grassed and shaded area being created, in which parents and children can relax.
- SW confirmed that the area would be completed and ready for use in time for the Fun Day 2006. Work should commence at the beginning of May.

7. Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)

- A meeting had also been held on site to discuss the MUGA. Having discussed the various options and cost implications with the architect, it was decided to place the MUGA parallel with the conifer hedge, behind the House, off centre from the existing tarmac (taking up some of the old play area). The remaining tarmac will be broken up, the waste being used for hardcore and the unused space grassed over.
- The standard colour used for the fencing is blue; however, the group's original request was to have green fencing, to blend in with the surroundings. SWest had looked into the cost implications and confirmed that we could afford to have green / silver, for an extra £500. This was agreed to by the group (financial restraints prevented any other suggestions).
- SW confirmed that it would be completed and ready for use in time for the Fun Day 2006. Work should commence at the beginning of May together with the Toddler Play Area.
- JJ stated that the old play area had originally been suggested to house a skate-park. SW advised that we do not have funds and/or agreement to have a skate-park and therefore, such a project would have to be looked at separately in the future.

8. Tree Surgery

- JCross had raised concerns about some of the trees marked for removal. RW confirmed that all the trees marked were dangerous and had been thoroughly checked.
- Eight trees will be removed from the park.
- SWest confirmed that a bat survey had been carried out and there was no danger to any bats by removing the trees.
- SW advised that the tree work would be carried out by those undertaking the pool work because their costs were cheaper.
- SW will arrange a visit from Steve Robinson, SMBC, to walk around the park with the Friends, to show and explain which trees are being dealt with and why.

9. General Information

- **Gates.** The issue of the padlocks being smashed off the gates was raised again. RW confirmed that they had been broken 7 times in one week. JCross asked for high security locks. Although these are expensive, in the long term they would work out cheaper. RW advised that the only problem might be the issuing of keys to the various park keepers – with the staff covering sickness and/or holidays, the probability of being unable to lock or unlock the gates being high. Agreed to wait until summer time to see whether the longer / lighter nights brought any relief to the problem.
- **Benches.** JCross wanted to know when the replacement iron benches could be fitted. RW thought it was a waste of time to put the expensive replacements back into the park because of the high probability of them being stolen again. It was suggested that they are used in the new play area but SWest advised that they are not suitable. JH suggested that if they were not to be used in the park that the equivalent cost

should be spent to provide other vandal proof benches (each of the 'fancy' benches are worth approx. £500 each). SW advised that it was the first time that these types of benches had been stolen from any of the parks in the borough and suggested using them in another park and receiving alternative replacements from SMBC. JC suggested removing the old metal benches from around the House, replacing them with new ones and using the old ones elsewhere around the park. SW advised it would take 6 weeks to order new benches.

- JH advised that new Notice Board is almost ready for installation.
- **Lakes.** SWest confirmed that 60% of the silt removed from top lake had dried out and should only take another 3 to 4 weeks, weather depending, for the remainder to dry. Once dry it can be moved around to use for landscaping. There should be some money left over to do some work on the lower lake – mainly fencing, water outlet and any Health & Safety issues. SW had been asked to provide a further £18k to put up new fencing around the silt pile. He had refused and asked them to simply reinforce existing fence.
- **Red House.** JCauser had recently read in a newspaper that the House was going to be turned into a hotel and wanted to know if there was any truth behind it. SWest advised that there would have to be a public consultation before it could be changed to a hotel and SMBC would not surrender enough land from the park to support the use of a hotel. Cllr TW said SMBC would not spend sufficient money to renovate the House and need a partnership to further any project. Offers have been made to SMBC but they have chosen not to take them up. Cllr TW estimated it would take £5mil to bring the House up to necessary standards and he thought the best idea so far had been to put the Library there, but this had also been turned down. SW advised that there were acts of Parliament to protect the demolishing of such buildings, however, Cllr TW advised that there were new instructions coming from the Deputy Prime Minister's Office to remove such protective laws.
- JH confirmed that we require Tony Potter, SMBC to order port-a-loos for the Fun Day. SWest made note.
- Cllr TW advised that there was approx. £30k of 106 money from the Sandringham Court development still to be appointed and used. JH to send list of all developments to David Brown for investigation. Once confirmed SW will advise group of all monies already spent on park.
- KC wanted to ensure that any new members were advised of future meetings and kept informed, so as not to lose their much-needed support. She suggested sending follow up letters to them. SWest advised that other Friends groups decide in advance on the dates of their meetings for the following year. A list could then be printed and handed out to any newcomers at the meetings. It was agreed to bring a list of dates to the next meeting.

10. Next Meeting

Next meeting has been scheduled for Monday 20th March 2006, Hill Lane at 7pm.