

PETERSFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Grounds Committee held at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Petersfield, on Thursday 15 April 2010 at 6.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Cllr R Ayer, Cllr C Jenner, Cllr Mrs S Kerby and Cllr W Organ

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Mr N Hitch (Town Clerk), Mrs S McMorran (Deputy Town Clerk), Mr P Jones (Maintenance Contracts Officer), Cllr Mrs Hilary Ayer, Cllr V Clarke and 14 members of the public

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, as both the Chairman and Deputy Chairman were not present, it was

RESOLVED that Cllr Jenner be elected as acting Chairman.

G 0691 CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

The Chairman had no comments.

G 0692 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Aiston.

G 0693 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Grounds Committee held on 11 March 2010 be approved.

G 0694 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

G 0695 PUBLIC REPRESENTATION

No requests had been received. Mr Crowhurst commented that it was good to see the report regarding the Heath Pond.

G 0696 MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS OFFICER'S (MCO) REPORT

Members received and noted the MCO's report, copy attached to these minutes at appendix A.

G 0697 THE HEATH

a. Container - Friends of Petersfield Heath

Members received a request for permission to place a storage container on the Heath adjacent to the car park on Heath Road on the heath side of the gate immediately to the east of the Little School.

It was thought that planning permission may be required for this project.

RECOMMENDED to Council that support be given in principle to the placing of a storage container on the Heath adjacent to the car park on Heath Road on the heath side of the gate immediately to

the east of the Little School for use by the Friends of Petersfield Heath subject to advice from the planning department at EHDC

b. Blue/Green Algae - Heath Pond

Members received a report from the Town Clerk outlining details of possible solutions to the problem of Blue/Green algae on Heath Pond, copy attached to these minutes at appendix B.

Following discussion it was

RECOMMENDED that the recommendations as outlined in the Town Clerk's report (at appendix B) be approved.

c. Testing Electric Model Craft

Members received a request from Sea Speed Marine Consulting Limited to carry out testing on Heath Pond with an electric model craft.

Members were generally in favour of the use of Pond for this purpose. Discussion took place on whether a charge should be made for this use. A proposal that a commercial charge should be made did not receive a seconder.

RECOMMENDED that permission be given to Sea Speed Marine Consulting Limited to carry out testing on Heath Pond with an electric model craft with the suggestion that a donation be made to the Mayor's Charity for this use.

G 0698

ALLOTMENTS

a. Offer of Land

Members received an offer of land at three sites from Adhurst Estates. The cost of the land to rent would be £1,000 per acre. Concern was expressed that two of the sites were out of parish. The Lords Farm fields (5 acres) seemed the most sensible option. It was agreed that the Allotment Association should be asked to consider the Lords Farm site and share their views with the Town Council.

Members were made aware (copy of letter sent to EHDC) that an application was going to be made for a new parish of Sheet and that decisions should not be made on assets in the proposed new parish until the outcome of the application was known. Surprise was voiced that this had been tabled at the meeting. Members agreed that a decision was not, at this time, being taken and it was therefore

RESOLVED that the Allotment Association be asked to consider the use of the proposed land at Lords Farm and the cost and to share their views with the Town Council for consideration at the May meeting of the Grounds committee.

b. Access to Sheet Allotments via Farnham Road

Members received a report and recommendation from the Town Clerk regarding the proposed access from Farnham Road to Sheet allotments, copy attached at appendix C.

It was agreed that the proposed cost (in excess of £25,000) was prohibitive for this work.

Discussion took place on possible planning and highways issues if the proposed expansion of Sheet Allotments took place. Members agreed that this would be an agenda item for the May meeting of committee.

Members were advised by the Town Clerk that it was unlikely that grants would be available for the access works. Following consideration it was

RESOLVED that, in view of the likely cost of the access from Farnham Road that this option be removed from further consideration for the expansion of Sheet Allotments.

Cllr and Cllr Mrs Ayer left the meeting at 7.20 pm

G 0699 **PENNS FARM PLAYING FIELDS**

A request was received for permission to fly small, quiet electric model planes (similar to gliders) at Penns Farm Playing Fields.

Members did not think the site was suitable for the purpose of flying model planes as the area was very well used by the public and sporting clubs and it was

RESOLVED that permission to use Penns Farm Playing Fields for the purpose of flying electric model planes would not be given.

G 0700 **HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SEASONAL VEGETATION CLEARANCE**

Members received a request from Hampshire County Council for input towards the development /updating of their seasonal vegetation clearance programme for the coming growing season. Cllr Organ had been asked to report on this matter and identified footpaths and bridleways which needed attention.

Cllr Clarke left the meeting at 7.35 pm

RESOLVED that the following sites be put forward to Hampshire County Council for the development/updating of their seasonal vegetation clearance programme:
Sheet Common Bridleway number 28
Sheet Common footpath number 25
Dark Hollow footpath 18 (tree narrows the footpath)
Buckingham Road/Bedford Road footpaths 3 and 8

Plus any sites identified by the Petersfield Ramblers Association.

G 0701 PLANTING SCHEME

Members received and considered an offer from Voice Grounds Care Group to continue with the maintenance of the Town Council planting scheme.

RESOLVED that the maintenance of the Town Council planting scheme remain with Voice Grounds Care Group for 2010.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.45 pm.

Maintenance & Contracts Officer's Report
to PTC Grounds Committee.
April 2010

Work is on schedule with grass cutting now increasing at all areas. Sports pitches are being chain harrowed and renovated over the next couple of months.

Our new Litter/Cleaning operative started on 1st April and is learning the area and work schedule, early indications look promising and our man seems quick to learn and so far is doing well. Of course it may take him a few weeks to get "up to speed"

Avenue Playing Fields:

- An event held by a regular hirer of the Pavilion required sufficient car parking for disabled and elderly people to attend, however because of the current parking restrictions, temporary access adjacent Weston Road had to be provided to allow car parking on part of the field. A proper permanent access arrangement at this location is planned and is required for use by our contractor and, potentially, future hirers.
- There have been a number of cases of fly tipping of garden rubbish in the corner of the field.
- I am obtaining estimates to replace the now demised timber cleft rail fence between the car park and the field.

Penns Farm Playing Fields:

- Due to previous wet weather it has been requested that the football playing season be extended a few weeks to allow all missed matches to be played. Goal posts will be left in situ until end of May.

Woods Meadow:

- I have ordered repairs to the chain-link fence which separates the north boundary from the adjacent field. It is damaged in several places probably as a result of people climbing over the fence to retrieve footballs.

Sheet Common:

- I have reminded the Sheet Common Dirt Jump Riders that they must keep to the agreed rules, remove dangerous objects, tidy up rubbish and keep the site tidy. They are aware that if they do not comply I may be forced to remove and flatten some of the jumps.

Continued at 2: over

The Heath:

- Scrub willow and saplings removal and some minor tree work has been completed alongside the boardwalk and beside the pond from the disabled drop-off along the to the boat jetty. Some work has been temporarily suspended due to bird nesting at some locations.
- The Easter Fair has taken place on the Heath and so far I have received no complaints or adverse comment.
- Essential work has completed emergency repairs to the bridge over the ditch at the eastern end of the Heath adjacent to Rival Moor road.
- Heath toilets. We have now submitted four estimates to our insurers and I am meeting with their Loss Adjusters on 13th April. I am hoping I will be able to organise repair works soon after this meeting.
- I have installed an additional temporary toilet (now four in total) and asked for extra servicing (now three times weekly).
- A New Life Buoy has been installed and two more will be installed later in the year.
- Over the Easter weekend considerable damage has been caused to the overhead barrier and stay post at Sussex Road car park and post carrying the "Millennium Path" sign has been ripped out and bent at right angles and is laying on the grass. The litter bin adjacent to the entrance has been ripped out and damaged and a tree has suffered damage. at the Heath, sometime between Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning. These matters have been reported to the police and I have ensured that the area has been made safe. We now have full details of the perpetrator and we are hoping to recoup any costs from them. There has also been some minor damage to one of the restored iron seats near to the nursery.
- A site meeting has finally been arranged with English Heritage in order to discuss the barrow reparation and tree management issues, in particular the future of the trees, on the ancient burial mounds around the Heath.
Attending the meeting will be; Dr Richard Massey - English Heritage, Eileen Moss - English Heritage, Adele Poulton - EHDC Arboriculture Officer, R.Burleigh - PTC tree Surgeon, and representatives from Friends of Petersfield Heath and Petersfield Cricket Club.
The meeting is to take place on Wednesday 21st April at 10:30am.
Town Council Members are welcome to attend.



GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Petersfield Heath Pond

Members will be aware of the ongoing problems with blue green algae at Heath Pond and the search for potential solutions to the problem.

Over the last couple of months I have received a couple of contacts offering solutions to the difficulty.

1. Totally unexpectedly I received a call from an organisation called Dyofix. Their product appears to be a blue dye that targets the ultra violet elements of the sun to halt algae growth and the formation of new algae. Once mixed with water it acts as a barrier, reflecting harmful colours away from the water surface whilst allowing other parts of light into the Pond.

It is only a temporary treatment, requiring re-application in 2-3 months as the dye gets broken down by sunlight. Each application would cost approximately £100-125.

I have forwarded details of this company to the Freshwater Biological Association (FBA), who the Maintenance Contracts Officer & I met some months back and John Charnock-Wilson who, amongst other things has links to Greening Petersfield. The FBA suggested the product should be viewed with caution and Mr Charnock-Wilson acknowledged the lack of sustainability of the product with the need to re-apply it after a few months and questioned whether it was appropriate for the Pond to be dyed an artificial blue colour. He also suggested that if members wanted to seriously consider this option, we should request research publications from a reputable independent body that show the product works in similar situations to that which we face and he would be content to give us his professional opinion on such works.

Further details are available on <http://www.dyofix.co.uk>.

2. Late last week, I had a discussion with Spirex Aquatic Limited who we have had contact from before in seeking a solution to the algal blooms affecting the Pond. The attached information sheet outlines the details of a product called 'swarm' that I have not had time to investigate further as to its effectiveness. Their email suggests a cost of £1,600 per application with the possible need for 3 applications per annum. On the face of it, this seems worthy of further exploration and I will contact the FBA and Mr Charnock-Wilson, as before, for their opinions. Whether their reports will be available before Committee meets cannot be promised. Again, further details are available from <http://www.spirexaquatic.com>.

3. Members may recall the 2 other offers we have had to improve the Pond. SolarBee (<http://www.solarbee.com>) originally offered us use of their product for a year without cost to prove that it worked. Whether members would want to see the floating circulator at all times on the Pond remains an issue. Secondly, members may recall the presentation by Phoslock® which remains a possible solution, albeit an expensive option that would need re-application in a few years to maintain the quality of the water.

Recommendations

Choosing a solution to the blue green algae problems on Heath Pond remains a matter causing great concern to officers as well as members. The solution needs to be:

- a) Effective
- b) Sustainable
- c) Value for money

All products offered need evaluation and I recognise that we do not have the expertise to be able to do this and grave concerns exist over the possible waste of public money if we get the decision wrong. Having said this, action needs to be taken otherwise the quality of the Pond is likely to continue to deteriorate and the Council would rightly be held accountable for not maintaining this magnificent public asset.

The most likely solution encountered so far appears to me to be the 'Swarm' product from Spirex Aquatic. To explore this further, the following action will be taken:

- 1 Obtain the opinion of the Freshwater Biological Association on the effectiveness and suitability of the product.
- 2 Contact John Charnock-Wilson for his opinion on the product.
- 3 Obtain the opinion of the Environment Agency Fisheries Section and ascertain if they know of its application elsewhere, successful or otherwise and how the two watercourses compare.

On balance, I would not recommend proceeding any further with the Dyofix product.

Neil Hitch
Town Clerk
12th April 2010

swarm



— **for reducing dissolved nutrients**

*Pond
Healer
Remedies*



Nutrients are essential to 'fuel' the aquatic ecosystem by supporting phytoplankton which sustain zooplankton, fish and higher animals. However, when they are present in excess they make water *eutrophic*, and vulnerable to prolific growth of algae ('green water', blue-green and filamentous) and nuisance weeds.

Problem-causing algae in ponds and lakes usually bloom if the ecosystem is not in balance. The excess nutrients responsible can enter the water from run-off from agricultural land or septic tanks, decomposing plant and animal matter, fish waste, uneaten angler's baits and droppings from waterfowl.

swarm is our trade name for a product that has been developed and used over the last 23 years, mostly in the USA. **swarm** is a blend of active bacteria that consume nutrients, thus reducing the scope for blooms of algae and weeds. The key feature of **swarm** is that **the active bacteria are delivered in vast numbers, and alive**. It is therefore applied as a ready-made, dominant life form, *thus removing any uncertainty of the growth and establishment of the bacteria if delivered in dormant 'seed' form*.

Because the **swarm** bacteria perform the role of nutrient scavengers, they may be thought of as *probiotics*, keeping the aquatic ecosystem balanced. **swarm** contains no pathogenic (disease-causing) bacteria, is safe in use, and does no harm to the environment. Although billions of active bacteria are supplied, they cause no significant turbidity of the water. The microbes in the formulation are selected in part because of their high specific rates of nitrogen and phosphorus consumption compared with those naturally occurring in the aquatic environment. By comparison with most similar species they have a high activity rate over a broad temperature range, making **swarm** a good, workable product. Whilst the microbes compete very effectively for nutrients, they also have another important capability. Included in the formulation are microbes that decompose organic wastes, such as accumulated sludge. *This can be expected to result in the added benefit of a progressive reduction in organic deposits in the lake.*

Treatment can begin once the water temperature has risen to 10°C in the spring, favourable to the proliferation of the bacteria. Ideally, this is timed to pre-empt the growth of algae. It is applied in 2 or 3 doses during the growing season, according to the pressures of temperature and available sunlight for that year.

Please note that this is not an *off-the-shelf* product, and is produced to order, with a minimum quantity (enough to treat 5 acres / 2 Hectares). It contains no disease-causing bacteria, only aquatic bacteria that take up dissolved nutrients, with added bacteria to breakdown organic matter.

We can offer an application service by fully-qualified personnel from a boat, should it be required (*price on application*).

swarm is complemented by a wide range of other remedies. Our approach to pond and lake management is to consider and treat the symptoms of the problems. However, we also like to *consider and treat the causes*, and aim to create an ecological balance, if possible.

see over for some examples of results for this year
Please contact us for further information, or refer to our web site.

**Spirex
Aquatec**



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Some *swarm* results in 2009:

Whilst *swarm* cannot be expected to deliver the same, decisive effects as the biocidal products that are now banned, some spectacular results have been achieved nonetheless, *and it is environment-friendly*

These are a few of the accounts given by our customers and contractors:

- * After treating a 7½ acre, council-controlled boating lake, previously choked with filamentous algae by May, algae didn't grow, and the water remained gin-clear for the season. The boat house Manager declaring that the condition of the lake was, "The best he has seen it in 30 years !"
- * After treating a 4 acre lake afflicted with blue green algae, the lake manager proclaimed: "The *swarm* worked brilliantly!! I still have algae but very acceptable. For some reason, the fish fed like crazy for 3-4 weeks after treatment?! Well done – great product!"
- * After treating a 6 acre lake with a severe algal bloom (blue-green and mixed) polluted by mud from an up-stream forest, the lake cleared within 2 weeks of treatment, and was fine afterwards
- * After treating an intensive coarse fishery, with a difficult *microcystis* (blue green algae) bloom, the bloom subsided (without disappearing completely), but the lake is in the best condition for years (according to regular anglers) and the fish have remained healthy, and feeding. The lake managers have used *swarm* as the start of a comprehensive 'over-haul' program (including mud remediation) recommended by Spirex Aquatec.



GROUNDS COMMITTEE

Sheet Allotments Access

Members will be aware that the possibility of creating an access into Sheet allotments from Farnham Road has taken time to be explored over the last few months. It has proved frustrating to get the answers we were seeking as at times we appeared to be going round in circles.

Last week, I was informed that a cost to provide this access would not be available until planning permission had been achieved, which contradicted previous advice that I had been given. I have though had another meeting with the Senior Engineer in Highways Development Control who has been kind enough to give approximate anticipated costs as an indication only and an outline of the process that the Council would need to follow.

To summarise, the following matters would have to be satisfied before any permission for this access would be granted:

- 1 A visibility splay of 2.4 meters by 215 meters would be required in both directions from the point at which the access joins the Highway. This is because the access is beyond the speed restriction zone. It must be debateable whether this requirement is met when viewing the road under the railway bridge.
- 2 If the above requirement cannot be met, the Council would have to commission an expert report to justify why application of this visibility splay condition should be varied and the report would need to identify compelling reasons for the variation.
- 3 The access road gradient for the first 15 meters should be no greater than 1:20 and thereafter no greater than 1:10 for safety reasons when approaching the Highway. This will prove very difficult to achieve given the size of the bank and gradient up to the allotment site.
- 4 All storm water must be dealt with.
- 5 Any excavation within a tree canopy may necessitate removal of the tree because of the de-stabilising nature of the work to the tree roots. This is likely to affect at least 4 trees and East Hampshire District Council may consider this has a major impact on the character of the road, leading to the imposition of Tree Preservation Orders.

- 6 Safety audits would be required at our expense.
- 7 A full structural retaining wall will be required at least through the embankment and a commuted sum would be required by Hampshire County Council from us for 20% of the cost of the wall for future maintenance
- 8 Arrangements would have to be made within the allotment site to ensure that all vehicles left the allotments in forward gear.
- 9 Where the access road meets the Highway, all vehicles must meet the carriageway 'square on' which given the depth of the embankment would mean an awful lot of soil removal to achieve this.
- 10 I am advised that for this level of work, it would have to be done under a section 278 agreement which can be both costly and time consuming. This procedure seeks to mitigate the impact of development on the road network, being part of the Highways Act 1990.
- 11 We would have to appoint a consultant and incur fees from Hampshire County Council for design checking and supervision of the scheme.
- 12 We would be responsible for all legal fees for drawing up a suitable legal agreement.

Overall, anticipated costs for providing the access would be in excess of £25,000 to which must be added all professional and legal fees.

Recommendations

Bearing in mind that the costs quoted above are just for the access and the availability of grants for such work must be highly questionable, my view is that it does not offer value for money and plans for the Farnham Road access should be 'dropped'.

Neil Hitch
Town Clerk
12th April 2010