

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
SPECIAL PROJECTS WORKING GROUP
HELD ON 18th APRIL 2006 AT 7.45 P.M. AT HARTLEY LIBRARY**

Present : Cllr Mr J Gaywood (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs A Oxtoby
Cllr Mr B Ramsay
Cllr Mr A Tremain (*arrived 7.49 p.m.*)

In attendance : Mrs J Hoad (Clerk)
Cllr Mr M Harris
Cllr Mr V Sewell
18 members of the public

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Cllr Mr C Alford and Cllr Mr A Barnett.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED: That, the minutes of the meeting of the Special Projects Working Group held on 9th March 2006 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Cherry Trees

The Working Group considered a report on progress made since the last meeting to (1) seek discussions with the landowner of the Cherry Tree shops about facilitating improvements to the surroundings of the shops and (2) request repairs be undertaken by Sevenoaks District Council to the hard landscaping around the shops, which were provided by the District Council in 1992 through an Environmental Enhancement scheme.

The Council considered a letter dated 21st March 2006 from the Chief Executive of Sevenoaks District Council informing that whilst the District Council grant aided the enhancement work, all ongoing maintenance was the responsibility of the Highway Authority or the private landowner.

Cllr Mr A Tremain arrived at the meeting at 7.49 p.m.

It was reported that the managing agents, Brickman Yale, acting on behalf of the landowner had responded to the Council's request for further discussions. The managing agents had confirmed they had no control over unknown persons dumping household items at the rear steps of the property and suspected that the tenants in the parade were not responsible for the dumped rubbish.

The Working Group examined a faxed copy of an estimate provided by the managing agents itemising works they propose to carry out at the Cherry Trees shops, which included taking up and relaying uneven paving slabs, replacement of broken slabs, removal of weeds to the slabs and removal of weeds from around the main building.

The Working Group welcomed the action proposed by the landowner to tidy up the area surrounding the shops and repair the paving slabs, but asked when this work would be carried out and questioned whether the tidy up would include the car park area at the rear of the shops. The Working Group suggested the landowner may wish to consider repairing

and replacing the bollards in order to prevent vehicles from parking on the pavement which could cause damage to the paving slabs.

RESOLVED: That,

(1) the letter dated 21st March 2006 from the Chief Executive of Sevenoaks District Council be noted,

(2) the fax dated 11th April 2006, from managing agents, Brickman Yale, acting on behalf of the landowner, including the estimate for works to the paving slabs and tidying up the area around the shops be noted.

(3) enquiries be made with the managing agents to establish whether the work to tidy up the area would include the car park at the rear of the shops and to confirm when the works would be carried out.

5. Access to Manor Field

The Working Group considered two e mails both dated 10th March 2006 from Messrs H F & J H Glover and an e mail dated 14th March 2006 from solicitors acting on behalf of Messrs H F & J H Glover, requesting the Council accept the terms and conditions laid down by the Messrs H F & J H Glover relating to improvement works to the entrance at Manor Field and insisting that if this was not undertaken all works, which were being undertaken at the entrance, should be ceased immediately. The Working Group considered the responses made by the Clerk on behalf of the Council, in which it was explained that the improvement works had been deemed necessary due to the dangerous condition of the existing gate and that the Council had a legal obligation to ensure the safety of members of the public at all times.

It was confirmed that no further communication on this matter had been received from Messrs H F & J H Glover or their solicitors since their e mail of 14th March 2006

RESOLVED: That, two e mails dated 10th March 2006 from Messrs H F & J H Glover and an e mail dated 14th March 2006 from solicitors acting on behalf of Messrs H F & J H Glover and the Clerk's responses to the e mails be noted.

6. United Reformed Church

The Working Group considered a report on discussions held with the Synod Trust Secretary for the United Reformed Church and the local Minister on 31st March 2006.

The Working Group questioned whether it would be possible to extend the Council's insurance policy to include public liability cover for the car park located in front of the Church, to enable the continued use of the car park by members of the public after the closure of the United Reformed Church and until such time as the Church had decided the future of the site.

The Working Group felt it would be beyond the means of the Council to purchase the site, but considered that it may be possible to enter into a legal agreement with the Church to use the site and the building for community purposes. If this was to be pursued, the Council would have to consider undertaking a feasibility study and prepare a business plan to assess the viability and sustainability of the project.

The Working Group explained that any initiative to secure the use of the building/s for some future use by the community would have to be led by the community, as it would be unlikely that the Parish Council would have the financial or physical resources to deliver the project. The Working Group believed that funding opportunities may be more readily accessible for community groups rather than parish councils.

The meeting was adjourned at 8.10 p.m. to allow members of the public present at the meeting to ask questions, and express their views and concerns on the future use of the site and the buildings, including the effect any redevelopment may have on the surrounding area.

The meeting resumed at 8.30 p.m.

RECOMMENDED: That,

(1) the Council investigates the possibility of entering into a legal agreement with the Trustees of the United Reformed Church to utilise the site to provide facilities for community use and in doing so, undertake a feasibility study to assess the financial viability and sustainability of delivering the project, including the preparation of a detailed business plan and,

(2) the Council's insurers be contacted to enquiry whether they would be willing to extend the public liability cover of the Council's insurance policy to include the car park located in the front of the United Reformed after the closure of the Church, until such time as the Church has decided on the future of the site.

7. Exclusion of the press and public

The Working Group considered six e mails dated 7th March, 15th March, 20th March, 21st March, 27th March and 7th April 2006 from a member of the public questioning the legality over the Working Group's decision to exclude members of the public from part of the previous meeting. The Working Group examined the responses made by the Clerk to the aforementioned e mails.

The Working Group stated that if any error in judgement had been made then an apology should be made, but nevertheless the Working Group was satisfied that it had conducted its business legally and properly. However, the Working Group recognised that the name of the group could give rise to some confusion and suggested that the name should be reviewed at the earliest opportunity. The Working Group expressed some concern over staff resources involved in responding to the aforementioned e mails and suggested that any further communication with the sender in connection with this matter should be done so in writing.

RESOLVED: That, the e mails dated 7th March, 15th March, 20th March, 21st March, 27th March and 7th April 2006 from a member of the public and the Clerk's responses to the e mails be noted.

RECOMMENDED: That, consideration be given by the Council at its Annual Meeting in May to review the name of each of the Council's Working Groups with a view to re naming them as Committees.

8. Date of the next meeting

Wednesday 24th May 2006 at 7.45 p.m. at Hartley Library.

The meeting closed at 8.45 p.m.

Signed:.....
Chairman

Date:.....

