

# Supporters of Ashton Gardens

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

held on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2005

**Members Present:** Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Sonia Chapman, Audrey Preston, Betty Higham, Audrey Bex, Arnold Sumner and David Meldrum.

**Also Present:** Terry Dalton, Christine Oldroyd, Pat Cartmell, Christine Barnes and Colin Barnes.

**Apologies received from.** Eileen & Gordon Harvey and Kath Bloch.

**Minutes of the last meeting:** Proposal of acceptance was by Betty Higham and seconded by David Meldrum.

**Matters arising:** David Meldrum claimed that the Chairman's offer to defray the cost of consulting the barrister ( 6.1 Land Disposal ) amounted to blackmail and should not have been made. The Chairman pointed out that as he had chosen to incur the costs, without consulting the Committee, for expediency he felt bound to guarantee the payment in this fashion. The Secretary confirmed that this was the interpretation he had put on the offer.

Christine Barnes suggested that all members should be consulted before SOAG funds are spent on improving the Gardens. ( 6.3 Ashton Memorial Drinking Fountain ).

### **Item for information:**

**5.1. Audrey Bex.** The Chairman welcomed Audrey back following her recent illness. He then relayed Audrey's thanks to everyone for the kind thoughts, cards and flowers she had received whilst she was ill.

**5.2. Institute update:** The Chairman reported that the Borough Council's stated plan to "*carefully dismantle and store key architectural features*" has given the public the impression that the Institute has been taken down and will be re-erected. The truth is that the building has been demolished and some parts have been stored in an open yard near the greenhouses. Debate on our response to this travesty was held over until A.O.B., when a relevant matter would be raised.

**5.3.Charitable Status:** The Chairman wrote to the Charity Commission on 4<sup>th</sup> July as he was concerned at hearing nothing of the Borough Council's application. His request for news of progress with the application and other details regarding representation by third parties was fielded by a Ms Louise Dwyer who informed the Chairman that the Borough Council have been reminded of their obligation and as a result of ongoing correspondence a number of technical points raised by the applicants were due to be put before the Commissions legal advisor as soon as they are available. The nature of the technical points has not been disclosed but the impression gained by the Chairman was that whilst it would seem probable that the Borough Council will have to comply eventually, they might stretch the procedure by taking their time over identifying and appointing trustees.

**5.4. Footpath / Right of Way:** The Chairman reported that the County Council's Regulatory Committee was recommended to decline the application for the Ashton Garden paths to be added to the definitive map. Objections by FBC and Newfield Jones ( barrister ). The County officers 20 page report covered all the arguments for and against, and summarised the officers own view. The principal difference between the recommendation to the Regulatory Committee, on the basis of FBC claiming the paths were a means of access to the Gardens and the SOAG claim that they represented a means of traversing the Gardens for the public, would seem to be the stumbling block and the County have been asked to reconsider this variation. The report

erroneously claimed that there was no parish council to consult and this has also been challenged. The matter is still unresolved.

#### **Items for decision:**

**6.1 Copy Letter:** The decision, taken at an earlier meeting, not to support this version of the Borough Council's masterplan for the regeneration of the Gardens was communicated to the Borough Council and the Civic Society in a letter. It was decided to withhold copies of this letter that are to be sent to the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage and the Garden History Society until it was clear that there were to be no amendments to the 'plan' that would allow us to withdraw our objection.

The Chairman is still awaiting information from Darren Bell on any changes that have been made. It was decided that if this matter was not resolved satisfactorily by the Friday following this meeting, the copy letters shall be sent.

**6.2 Bulb Planting:** A decision, at an earlier meeting, to approve expenditure of £200 towards bulb planting in the Autumn on the understanding that this would contribute to a scheme organised by the St. Anne's In Bloom Trust Co-ordinator, Mr. Stephen Martin, with the approval of FBC. A change in circumstances has led to this scheme being abandoned. After a lengthy discussion on the options available to us a proposal was made by Arnold Sumner that £200 be set aside for bulb planting this year. This was seconded by David Meldrum and carried by 7 votes in favour with none against. It was further decided to make Cllr. Barbara Pagett aware of this decision.

**6.3 Autumn Coffee Morning.** A decision was taken to hold a Coffee Morning this autumn and volunteers were invited to assist. A sub-committee was formed to decide the details and it was resolved that this would meet before the next Committee meeting and report the progress it had made.

**7.0 A.O.B.** Terry Dalton reported on the bookings for the Courtfield lunch and said he hoped to organise the postponed visit to the Solaris.

Colin Widmer Barnes read a letter he has sent to Mr. Ken Lee, the CE of FBC, re Ashton Institute and showed illustrations of the development he has proposed.

The Chairman produced an audio tape, provided by Miss Irene Steele, of a broadcast entitled 'Age of the Park' and it was agreed that this would be copied to enable members to listen to it at their leisure.

The Chairman reminded members that they may have items included on the agenda provided that they give the Secretary sufficient notice.

Colin Widmer Barnes reported that large cacti, from the dismantled greenhouses in the Gardens, are likely to perish in the cold weather if they are not re-housed beforehand. Arnold Sumner offered to ask Darren Bell to contact Chester Zoo with a view to sending them there.

**Date and Time of next Meeting:** Monday, 3rd October 2005 at 9.30 am