

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the STANBOROUGH CAR PARKS TASK AND FINISH WORKING GROUP\* held on Tuesday 3 February 2009 at 5.00pm at Campus West, Welwyn Garden City.

\* Reporting to Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

PRESENT: Councillors H Bromley (Chairman)

J.Cragg, C.Croft, L.Lotz

ALSO PRESENT: T.Davidson, Welwyn Hatfield Environmental Network (WHEN)  
Councillor F.Thomson

ALSO PRESENT BY INVITATION: S.Smale, Vice-Commodore, Stanborough Sailing Club  
M.V.Pestle, Welwyn Garden City Angling Club  
A.Carr, Finesse Leisure Trust  
W.P.Davis, Welwyn Garden City Society  
D.Lewis, Welwyn Garden City Society

OFFICIALS PRESENT: Director (Strategy and Development) (C.Conway)  
Head of Community Services (C.Rigby)  
Head of Landscape and Ecology (A.MacDonald)  
Committee Manager (J.Keene)

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2. APOLOGIES:

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C.Couch.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2009 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. VIEWS OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS:

The Chairman welcomed those present at the meeting and explained it was being held to gain interested parties thoughts and ideas on replacement planting in the south and north car parks at Stanborough Lakes. This was the beginning of the process and there were no current plans in place.

The Director (Strategy and Development) said there were some main elements to consider:-

- Strategy for remaining trees in north car park

- Replacement planting in the south car park
- Replacement planting strategy for north car park, if required

The three consultants' reports had been previously circulated. The programme was to consult with interested parties, put forward some options which would go out to a public consultation exercise. It was intended that a report with recommendations would go forward to the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in July 2009 for decision. This would enable re-planting to be planned and take place in Autumn 2009.

Will Davis of the Welwyn Garden Society gave a presentation of the Society's understanding and key points from the tree consultant's reports.

Their conclusions were:-

- A clear fell was the least worthy option.
- The Task and Finish Group should consider all the reports but give most weight to those that exhibited the greatest technical expertise and recognised standards.
- A phased approach should be the focus of discussion.
- A coherent and unbiased public consultation should take place on the Task and Finish Group recommendations.
- Details of any re-planting scheme should be made public.
- Consider improving the car park surface and repairing root damage at the same time.

Mr Lewis of Welwyn Garden City Society discussed budgetary aspects of the re-planting and suggested a five year plan with reasonable resources to improve the environment and amenities of the car parks. He said it was important to retain the heritage and architecture of the car parks whilst considering what to replant. He felt a phased renewal would be of most benefit with effective control and monitoring. Mr. Lewis supported the full public consultation, using all means of communication. He suggested an annual review for the car parks and the possibility of including the future of the town centre poplars in the five year plan.

There was a general discussion for what criteria should be considered when looking at future options.

It was agreed to include the following:-

- Restart the "Friends of Stanborough" organisation.
- Trees that had low cost maintenance.
- Native species of trees.
- Diversity of trees.
- Screening from motorway
- Whether both car parks should look the same or have different

trees.

- Trees that were barriers for cars but gave access to people around the car park.
- What shade the trees offered.
- Natural habitat for wildlife.
- Cost.
- Density of planting.
- Amenity value.
- How the car park could be used or redesigned.
- Size of saplings to be planted.
- Sustainability and impact on the environment.
- Whether to replace with all poplars, occasional poplars or no poplars.
- Aesthetic value.
- Phased removal.
- Phased replanting.
- Height of trees (Maximum 5 metres to enhance winds for sailing).
- Whether to expand width of car park spaces.

It was agreed replanting was preferable to any form of fencing, and to view the area as a 'green' area with a car park, rather than a car park with trees in it.

Mr Carr reminded members that the car park had been closed on six occasions recently for health and safety reasons, which may be a future consideration when deciding whether or not to have phased felling.

Members agreed to consider all the criteria and the Director (Strategy and Development) would report back to the meetings due to be held in March with various options before they are sent out for public consultation.

Meeting ended 6.15pm.

JK