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MINUTES OF THE WELSH HARP JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE Wednesday, 11 November 2009 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Farrell (LB Brent) (Chair) and Councillors Motley (LB Brent), O'Sullivan (LB Brent), Wharton (LB Brent) and Johnson (LB Barnet) and Peter Castle (Hendon Rifle Club), Molly Savage (Local Agenda 21), John Colmans (London Wildlife Trust), Brian Turner (Training Ship Broadsword), Roy Beddard (Welsh Harp Conservation Group), Farzana Yousaf (Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre), Brian Turgoose (Welsh Harp Sailing Association), Judy Shepherd (West Hendon Community Forum) and Geoffrey Johnson (Woolmead Residents' Association)

Apologies were received from: Councillors Davey (LB Barnet), Hart (LB Barnet) and Rayner (LB Barnet) and Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust), Commander G Beck (Training Ship Broadwalk) and Harry Mackie (Welsh Harp Environmental Education Centre)

Also in attendance: Jeff Bartley (LB Brent), Jenny Warren (LB Barnet), Stephen Weeks (LB Brent), Leslie Williams (LB Brent), Victoria McDonagh (LB Brent) and Hugh Petrie (LB Barnet)

1. **Declarations of personal and prejudicial interests**

There were none declared.

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:-

that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16th July 2009 be approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. **Matters arising (if any)**

Use of chemicals:

Following an expressed interest from Clive Cohen (London Wildlife Trust – Barnet Group) regarding what chemicals were being used in the borough, Jenny Warren (Barnet Parks Service) explained that Councillor Hart had raised a question about the use of herbicides, for which an answer was being formulated.

Bird hide:

In response to a request for an update on the bird hide, Jenny Warren informed the committee that they were due to meet with the contractor on the 23rd November and that the hide would be erected before Christmas.

4. Welsh Harp Reservoir Management Plan (Brent)

Leslie Williams (Brent Parks Services) introduced his report which provided an update on the progress of the Brent Reservoir / Welsh Harp Management Plan and related issues. He began by informing the committee that there had been a problem with weed growth in the water over the summer and that British waterways had been leading on possible solutions. He explained that the clean up, by British Waterways, on the southern side of the Reservoir continued. He added that the maintenance of the Heritage Lottery Fund Award project also continued, as did the maintenance of the Biodiversity Action Plan.

Leslie Williams made the committee aware of upcoming events in the Welsh Harp. He informed the committee that the Healthy Walks Programme, organised by Brent Council Sports Services, was continuing until March 2010 and that the walks started at the Welsh Harp Open Space car park every Thursday from 10am-11am. He noted that on November 18th, at 7.30pm, the Willesden Local History Society had arranged for a talk to be held on 'Eric Simms and the Bird life of Dollis Hills.' He concluded by adding that organisations should contact him if they would like any copies of the capital ring leaflets for walks 9 and 10.

RESOLVED:-

that the report be noted.

5. Welsh Harp Reservoir Management Plan (Barnet)

Jenny Warren (Barnet Parks Services) informed the committee that a working group meeting with key stakeholders was held on the 4th November. She stated that the group decided that, in addition to the annual management plan, an action plan would also be created that would address key issues and priorities for the Reservoir. The action plan, she explained, would contain objectives, actions and targets and would assign responsibilities for actions. She stated that the working group were meeting on the 8th December to produce the action plan. Jenny Warren explained that they hoped to be able to bring the draft action plan to the January meeting of this committee. Due to time constraints she noted that the action plan may not be ready in time for the dispatch deadline for January's meeting. She asked therefore whether the committee would consider it acceptable to receive the action plan either just before the day of the committee meeting or, if this was not possible, on the evening of the committee meeting. The committee agreed that due to time constraints this was acceptable.

RESOLVED:-

that the verbal update be noted.

6. Planning Issues

Following a request from a committee member, the Chair had agreed to hold a discussion on the planning application (09/3220), which had been submitted to Brent Council, for the erection of 71 dwellings with amenity open space at the

Greenhouse Garden Centre site in Birchen Grove. Victoria McDonagh (Senior Planning Officer, Brent Council) introduced the summary note that was provided to the committee, which set out a summary of the proposed scheme and the key issues.

The committee sought clarification from Stephen Weeks (Head of Area Planning, Brent Council) and Victoria McDonagh on a number of points regarding the detail of the application. Following an enquiry, Stephen Weeks explained that the applicant was proposing to reduce the number of current car spaces from 170 spaces and therefore was arguing that the amount of vehicles being used would be reduced. It was noted by members of the committee that the applicant had suggested, in the information given out to the public at the site, that he was planning to go ahead with either this development in Brent or the one in Barnet, but not both. In response, Stephen Weeks stated that this had not been made a formal part of the application and would need to be confirmed. In response to another enquiry, Stephen Weeks explained that the planning permission granted in 1999, to create a new access to the site by extending the Birchen Grove carriage way and footpath, was still live because the development had been started. It was noted by a member of the committee that it seemed that this planning application was not brought to the attention of this committee in 1999.

The Chair then asked for the committee's views on the application and agreed to feedback the committee's views as part of the consultation process. Following a vote, the committee unanimously agreed to object to the planning application on the following grounds:

- It was noted by the committee that the application site was on Metropolitan Open Land and that the nature of the development was clearly an inappropriate use of this land.
- The committee noted the site's proximity to the SINC and SSSI. They were concerned about the impact, in conservation terms, of the disturbance which would be caused by the construction and the completed development once occupied. The impact on wildfowl and bats was raised as a particular concern. The committee felt that the applicant had failed to provide any detailed proposals on how to limit the impact of the development on the SSSI and SINC.
- The applicant had stated that he was of the opinion that the scheme would cause less traffic as there would be less car parking spaces than there currently were at the garden centre. However, it was noted by the committee that from visiting the car park at the garden centre that the car park seemed to rarely be more than a quarter full. The committee were also concerned about the 24 hour use of vehicles which would result from a development of this nature.
- The committee were concerned that if the application was accepted that it would set an unwelcome precedent should further applications be made in the future for similar schemes. This included the parallel application which had been submitted to Barnet Council which was discussed under any other business.

RESOLVED:-

- i) that the Chair feeds back the views of the committee as part of the consultation process noting that the committee objects to the planning application for the reasons set out above.
- ii) that members of the committee send any further comments regarding the application to the Chair or to Elly Marks (Democratic Services, Brent Council).

7. 175th Anniversary of the Welsh Harp

The chair introduced Hugh Petrie (Heritage Officer, Barnet Council) who was present to talk about the exhibition which had been put together to celebrate the history of the Welsh Harp. He explained that the aim was to show the exhibition in schools, museums and libraries across Brent and Barnet in order to give people an insight into the area's history. The timing of the exhibition, he stated, could not be better as it tied in with the 175th Anniversary. The display, he added, was available in A2 and A3 size.

Cllr Farrell expressed an interest in having the exhibition at the school, in the Welsh Harp, that she was a governor in. The Welsh Harp Environmental Educational Centre also expressed an interest in holding the exhibition. In response to an enquiry, Hugh Petrie explained that notice of the exhibition would be going into Brent and Barnet's school circular and that it would also need to be circulated to the libraries. He added that the Canal Museum in Central London had shown an interest in holding the exhibition and that the display would be going up in the Church Farm Museum later this month.

Hugh Petrie informed the committee that an example of the exhibition had been set up at the back of the council chamber and that committee members were welcome to have a look after the meeting.

The committee then discussed further ways to mark the 175th Anniversary of the Welsh Harp. There was a suggestion from a member of the committee that organisations who work and use the Welsh Harp could hold an open day where the exhibition could also be shown. A suggestion was made to tie it in with the Kingsbury Open Day. It was noted that clarification of the date of the Kingsbury Open Day was required. The Welsh Harp Sailing Association stated that they had participated in a Kingsbury Open Day in the past and that they had some concerns regarding safety which would need to be discussed further. The Chair asked those representing their organisations on the committee to go back to their organisations and to discuss whether there was a commitment from them to participate in an open day. The Chair suggested that this issue be discussed further in the committee's meeting in January.

8. Any Other Urgent Business

It was agreed to discuss the planning application (03560/09), which had been submitted to Barnet Council after the agenda for this committee meeting was sent out, for the demolition of all existing buildings and the erection of 90 dwellings and the creation of areas of open space at the Woodfield Nursery site on Cool Oak Lane, as any other urgent business.

The Chair asked for the committee's views on the application and agreed to feedback the committee's views as part of the consultation process. Following a vote the committee unanimously agreed to object to the planning application on the following grounds:

- It was noted by the committee that the application site was on Metropolitan Open Land and that the nature of the development was clearly an inappropriate use of this land.
- The committee noted the sites' proximity to the SINC and SSSI. They were concerned about the impact, in conservation terms, of the disturbance which would be caused by the construction and the completed development once occupied. The impact on wildfowl and bats was raised as a particular concern. The committee felt that the applicant had failed to provide any detailed proposals on how to limit the impact of the development on the SSSI and SINC.
- It was noted that the proposed development would result in increased congestion in the area. The concern was raised that Cool Oak Lane was a very narrow road and would be unable to cope with the additional vehicle movements which would result from the proposed development.
- The close proximity of the Woodfield Nursery Site to an outdoor rifle range was also raised as a concern.
- The committee were concerned that if the application was accepted that it would set an unwelcome precedent should further applications be made in the future for similar schemes. This included the parallel application that had been made to Brent Council which had been discussed under item 6.

RESOLVED:-

- i) that the Chair feeds back the views of the committee as part of the consultation process noting that the committee objects to the planning application for the reasons set out above.
- ii) that members of the committee send any further comments regarding the application to the Chair or to Elly Marks (Democratic Services, Brent Council).

Jeff Bartley (Environmental Projects & Policy Manager, Brent Council) informed the committee of the launch of the Brent Climate Strategy which was taking place at the Sattavis Patidar Centre on the 2nd December 2009.

Leslie Williams (Parks Services, Brent Council) noted that a talk on the 'History of the Welsh Harp' which had been organised by the Wembley History Society would be held on the 15th January 2010, 7.30pm at St. Andrew's Church Hall, St. Andrew's Church, Kingsbury NW9.

9. **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting is Tuesday 12th January 2010.

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm

M FARRELL
Chair