“Central Woods” Management Committee

Minutes of a Meeting on the 26th January 2017 in the Hinton Room

Those attending:-

Members of the Parish Council
Paul Blackwell, Kay Coles (Chair), Robyn Davison, Pat Knight, Iain Osborne, Robert Snedker, Julie Turner, Christina Williams
Clerk to the Council: Gary Smith

Members of the Public
Six members of the public.

1. Receive and consider apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Alison Bolton, Lynda Stangle and David Campion.

2. Receive an introduction to the creation of this Committee from the Chairman of the Parish Council.

Kay Coles explained that the Parish Council (PC) had purchased the land currently known as Central Woods for the benefit of the village. The land includes 23 acres comprising the Railway Embankment and the land beside the Byfield Road to the north and west of the Cherwell starting at Kitchen Lane. She explained the need for the Committee to consider issues relating to the management of the land and to make recommendations to PC on its management, future use and related funding. PC had decided that the Committee should comprise five Parish Councillors and five members of the general public. PC had nominated Bob Snedker, Paul Blackwell, Christina Williams, Julie Turner and Kay Coles. The Committee should involve as many residents as possible. If more members of the public come forward, the Committee could propose enlarging the Committee to include them to PC.

3. Elect a Chairman of the Committee.

Bob Snedker was proposed, seconded and elected as Chairman.

4. Elect a Vice-chairman of the Committee.

Paul Blackwell was proposed, seconded and elected.

5. Appoint a person to record the Committee’s minutes and report to the Parish Council.

John Williams was appointed to carry out this role.
6. Co-opt five members of the Committee.

The following members of the public declared themselves willing to serve as Committee members and were co-opted: Philippa Throssell, Patricia Darby, Ruth Curzon, Peter Deverill & John Williams*.

(*Note: subsequent to the meeting John Williams indicated he would serve as secretary but not as a Committee member.)

7. Consider a name for the former railway embankment and associated land.

It was agreed that the Committee should seek input from the village on the name for the land and make a recommendation to PC.

Patricia Darby agreed to approach the school with a view to getting suggestions from the children.

John Williams agreed to ask for suggestions on the Signpost and Facebook.

Other Committee members were encouraged to seek views from their contacts.

Suggestions should be provided to the Chairman by 21st February for consideration at the next Committee meeting.

Ideas already received included:-

- Great Central Park
- Great Central Wood
- Railway Wood
- Central Wood
- Embankment Wood
- Railway Country Park
- Shaleford Wood (an anagram of “Woodford Halse”, submitted via the Signpost)

There was a strong feeling that the name should reflect the historic heritage of the land and its relationship to the village.

8. Receive a report on arrangements for forestry management.

Bob Snedker explained that one of the tasks facing the Committee was the management of the woodland. An assessment of the trees had revealed that there were many damaged and diseased trees. Active management of the woodland was needed. The proprietor of Tree Tops, a company which runs a tree surgery school, had proposed using the wood as a training school as a way to do this at least cost to the village and it was suggested that the Tree Tops proposal be considered as a part of the overall Management Plan for the land.

9. Hear issues raised by the public.

None raised before the meeting.

10. Consider any other item which the Chairman decides is relevant to this Committee.

A number of issues were discussed as issues that the Committee will need to work on. These were:-

- Gary Smith pointed out that the Committee will need to act under Parish PC Standing Orders regarding the holding of meetings, publishing minutes, voting on matters etc. All members of the Committee will need to declare any personal interests relating to the Committee’s affairs. Members of the public may only speak at meetings if Standing Orders are suspended by the Chairman.
Bob Snedker emphasised that meetings would be open to the public as PC wanted to ensure the greatest possible involvement of the community in the management of their woodland.

Funding will be needed to minimise the costs of ownership and to limit the impact on PC Tax. One of the roles of the Committee will be to identify sources of funding and to raise funds directly. Paul Blackwell had identified that the Forestry Commission could advise on the Management Plan and could act as a route to grants. Kay Coles said that Tree Tops could also provide suggestions. Ruth Curzon said she had been successful in fund raising for the Country Fair.

Disabled and elderly access will be an important issue

Security and policing will need to be considered.

The Committee could consider commercial opportunities from timber, although initial indications were that this was unlikely to be practical and that it was more likely that any felled timber would be used within the land.

The Committee needed to be aware of the risk of unauthorised removal of timber.

Ruth Curzon has good experience in recruiting volunteer support. Facebook would be a useful channel to help in developing this.

Safety issues would need to be part of any Management Plan (PC has public liability insurance coverage and Tree Tops’ proposal includes insurance to cover their activities.)

A report has been received on the condition of the culvert which carries the Cherwell under the land. This culvert is part owned by Northants CC. PC does not own and is not responsible for the railway bridge (“skew bridge”) over Station Road.

The Committee needs to consider how vehicle access for management and for emergency vehicles will be provided. Northants CC own a “ransom strip” of 2 metres beside the Byfield Road and Phipps Road. Negotiations will be needed with Northants CC to provide vehicular access.

Kay Coles confirmed that the price paid for the property (£192,000 including vendor’s professional fees) should be in the public domain.

A number of ideas for inclusion in the overall plan for the use of the plan were mentioned. There will need to be a balance between recreation and conservation. Any developments will need to have the support of the village. Ideas mentioned that will be considered by the Committee included:-

- a BMX track
- a pool feature in the wetland area
- children’s “wild space”
- car parking
- a memorial and ash-scattering area

11. Set a date for the next Committee meeting - Thursday 23 February 2017.

Bob Snedker thanked all for attending the meeting and for their support.

Committee Members were asked to provide to Gary Smith (pc_woodford@daventrydc.gov.uk) items for the next meeting’s agenda by 16th February.
A Map of the Land Purchased By The Village As “Central Woods”