11 July 2017 at 7.00 pm

Conference Room, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks

Sevenoaks
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Direct & Trading Advisory Committee

At the above stated meeting the attached was part of the address by Bradbourne Residents Association

8. **Bradbourne Lakes - Sevenoaks** (Pages 1 - 14)

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B.R.A. PRESENTATION – 11 July 2017

I should first explain that Bradbourne Residents' Association represents the interests of those citizens of Sevenoaks living in the triangle formed by the two railways running north from Sevenoaks, the third boundary being the A25. Of some 630 households, our membership is a strong 440.

In the middle of this lies Bradbourne Lakes Park which used to be a well-managed Sevenoaks asset. It even included exotic wildfowl from Slimbridge and a pair of swans.

However, a couple of decades of increasing neglect, during which maintenance was reduced to a minimum, allowed it to deteriorate to a very dilapidated state, with the lakes silted up, stonework broken, trees overgrown and much of the infrastructure removed, rotten or vandalised. That was 7 years ago, when BRA began a campaign to have the park and lakes restored.

In 3Q 2012 we conducted a park visitor survey. I have it here. It doesn't make easy reading. It recorded deep dissatisfaction with the state of the park & a strong desire for restoration. It also established that visitors came from all over the Sevenoaks District and beyond, not just the local neighbourhood.

Much of the dilapidation continues to this day, in some cases it's even worse, as the pictures you have illustrate. Perhaps unfairly, it has become a highly visible example of the council in action.

However, instead of being the typical agent of criticism & complaint, BRA has established a good working relationship with SDC and the two entities together have been able to address some of the problems.

Inevitably, with the passage of time during which nothing much was done, the Council has had to undertake major remedial tree surgery, felling dangerous trees, lopping others. It also had to ensure outside agencies such as Thames Water and Kent Highways faced up to their responsibilities for what flowed into the lakes. The sump was repaired, broken and vandalised benches were replaced and, most striking of all, was the wholesale replacement of the park's fencing. This was a superb example of joined-up thinking, utilising timber that required felling in Farningham Wood.

While this was going on, BRA established volunteer work parties which, on various Saturdays, descend on the park to undertake simpler tasks for which

SDC has neither the money nor the staff. These include disposing of smaller fallen trees and branches, removing overhanging vegetation, cutting back overgrown undergrowth, clearing debris from watercourses and unblocking sluices.

As regards park furniture, BRA itself replaced the vandalised noticeboard and match funded grants from Sevenoaks Town Council for tree replacement and a new heavy-duty picnic table.

And the Park is well-used. Of course, there are the many visitors who come daily to walk their dogs, feed the wildfowl or just enjoy the quiet. But BRA also organises events which cater for a variety of interests, from story-time for the under-5s to a musical picnic-in-the-park, and from the annual Easter-egg hunt to gatherings of the Sevenoaks Scale Model Boat Club.

A Council and Residents' Association working well together sounds very positive, but in no way can this address the crucial issues of crumbling infrastructure, accumulated silt and dense, overgrown woodland. Clearly urgent, if nothing is done in terms of a major renovation it will only get worse. Yet such an exercise appears beyond the Council's resources.

SDC has been to Heritage Lottery before, but that application failed. One conclusion is that what is required here needs expertise beyond the normal. And mere renovation, itself a substantial task, is not enough. With the HLF, it's a vision thing, how should the park be brought into the 21st century to cater for current and future needs.

This would involve engagement with existing & potential park users to determine requirements for disability-access, park facilities, furniture and so on. It might well include, for example, a multi-purpose pavilion, with toilets. And, of course, considerations of security, given the possibility of vandalism. You have an established partner in BRA, an important HLF requirement, and our commitment to the park continues.

This is a much valued but fast deteriorating Sevenoaks District Community Asset. Cllr Dickens' proposal to use LUC provides a very realistic way forward. If not adopted, it begs the question "What alternative does the Council have in mind?"

BRADBOURNE LAKES PARK
Images for
Direct & Trading Advisory Committee, 11 July 2017
Provided by Bradbourne Residents' Association

The Dilapidated State of the Park & Lakes – first page

MASSIVE ACCUMULATIONS OF SILT

TREES DISLODGING LAKE EDGING

PATHS DISINTEGRATING

WILLOW TREE COLLAPSED INTO LAKE

UNDERGROWTH BECOMES “OVERGROWTH”

The Dilapidated State of the Park & Lakes – second page

TREES OVERHANGING THE LAKE

WATER LOSS THROUGH FRACTURED BASE

BROKEN LAKE EDGINGS

UNDERGROWTH SPREADS INTO LAKE

TREES & FALLEN BRANCHES IN NEED OF ATTENTION

The Dilapidated State of the Park & Lakes – third page

TREES GROWING OUT OF LAKE'S BRICK BORDER

REPAIRS TO STONEWORK REQUIRED

PATHS DISAPPEARING INTO UNDERGROWTH

THERE'S A STREAM UNDER HERE SOMEWHERE!

SDC's recent activity

REPAIR OF THE SUMP

REPLACING BROKEN BENCHES

AGREEMENT FOR THAMES WATER TO EMPTY SILT TRAPS

NEW FENCING AND GATES TO THE PARK

ALSO, REPAIR OF CIRCULATION PUMP & AD HOC TREE SURGERY

Bradbourne Residents' Association Work Parties – first page

GENERAL CLEAR-UP

REMOVING FALLEN OR OVERHANGING TREES

HEDGE TRIMMING

CLEARING UNDERGROWTH

Bradbourne Residents' Association Work Parties – second page

TRIMMING WILLOW TREES

CLEARING WATER COURSES

ATTENDING TO BROKEN BRANCHES

CLEARING DEBRIS, UNBLOCKING SLUICES & REMOVING OVERHANGING VEGETATION

Bradbourne Residents' Association Work Parties – third page

UNCOVERING (DISCOVERING?) A PATH

LOADING ONE OF THE COUNCIL BINS

SOME OF THE BRADBOURNE TEAM

A FEW MORE OF THE TEAM

Bradbourne Residents' Association – functions & furniture in the park

THE ANNUAL KIDS' EASTER EGG HUNT

THE EASTER CHICKEN COMES BEARING CHOCOLATES

FATHER CHRISTMAS AT THE LAKES

SEVENOAKS SCALE MODEL BOAT CLUB

ALSO, STORY TIME FOR THE UNDER FIVES

Bradbourne Residents' Association – functions & furniture in the park

PICNIC IN THE PARK
WITH THE SEVENOAKS & TONBRIDGE CONCERT BAND

TABLE MATCH-FUNDED BY B.R.A. & TOWN COUNCIL

CATALPA TREE JOINT FUNDED
BY TOWN COUNCIL & B.R.A.

NOTICE BOARD PURCHASED BY RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION