

Minutes of the extra-ordinary meeting held at the Village Hall on Tuesday 20th April 2010.

Council Members Present:

Cllr. Harrison (Chairman), Cllr. Mrs Thornton (Vice chair), Cllr. Higgins, Cllr. Watkins, Cllr. Jemison, Cllr. Mrs Green, Cllr. Dunn, and Cllr. Mrs Bruce.

PC Andrew Haigh attended the meeting to represent North Yorkshire Police

One hundred and forty seven members of the public were present.

10/52 1 **Apologies for absence.**
Cllr. Dale and Cllr. Mellors

10/53 2 **Keble Park Play Area**

The Chairman, Cllr. Harrison, read out the following statement:

“Thank you for coming this evening to an Extra-Ordinary Meeting of Bishopthorpe Parish Council.

Before I start the meeting, I must ask if there are any apologies for absence.

I intend to give a short introduction to the meeting indicating where the Parish Council believes it is in relation to matters concerning the Keble Park Play Area.

There will then be a short period for questions, queries or suggestions from the floor. If you do have a comment please wait for the roaming mike to come round and open by giving your name and address.

This meeting was called to discuss specific issues surrounding the construction of the Keble Park Play Area.

You have probably all read the Parish Council Statement on Bishopthorpe.Net and Facebook and I therefore have no intention of repeating all the comments previously reported.

We have received several complaints and held various discussions with residents about the play area during Parish Council meetings over the previous five months.

Bearing in mind, that also during this period, we received no support, either verbal or written, from any other Parishioner the Parish Council agreed to four distinct actions about the play area at our meeting on 23 March 2010.

However, following that meeting, at which several members of the public were in attendance, we have now received several letters of support and the “Save the Bishopthorpe Playground Climbing Frame” campaign has over 500 members on Facebook.

Since the meeting on 23 March, there have been no further formal meetings but Parish Councillors have informally discussed the situation and have unanimously agreed the need for this meeting.

Under our constitution we are able to re-visit any decision made at a Parish Council meeting in the light of new information made available to the Council.

Therefore, we convened tonight's meeting and the formal agenda was published under the following headings:

- Fencing
- Gating
- Opening and closing times
- High Slide
- Jungle Climber

I must stress that we will be keeping strictly to these items and any new issues will be taken away for further discussion – probably in our meeting on 27 April.

Hopefully, we can agree a way forward this evening, but I must emphasise that any decisions taken this evening will be final and no member of the public attending the next Parish Council meeting or any other subsequent meeting will be able to change the decision.

So to the agenda:

Fencing

As you are probably aware the park is now closed and the fencing contractor is currently erecting a fence to a height of 1.8m all around the perimeter of the park.

Gating

Gates will also be installed on the entrances to the park in the next week.

Double gates on the Lamplugh Crescent entrance – which will remain locked unless vehicle access is required.

And

A single pedestrian access gate on Keble Park North, which will be locked and unlocked on a daily basis.

Opening and Closing Times

We have currently received 10 -15 offers to lock and unlock the gate – and if there are any further volunteers please let us know.

Preliminary discussions have been held with some of these volunteers and the early indications are that the park will be open and closed at the following times during the summer:

Monday to Friday	9:00am to 7:30 pm
Saturday	10:00am to 7:30pm
Sunday	10:30am to 7:30pm

High Slide

I am seeing a representative of Playdale tomorrow to discuss various alternatives on whether the slide design can be changed or if it could be re-sited by moving slightly.

Jungle Climbing Frame

We have discussed this situation in light of new information and:

- It is clear that the cost of re-siting the climbing frame in the park would be prohibitive, as it would involve changing the whole layout of the park.
- It is also clear from the campaign on Facebook and letters of support that a large number of parishioners want it to remain in the park.

Therefore, following informal discussions between Parish Councillors, it would appear, that by erecting a fence and installing gates with specified opening and closing times, there is strong support within the Parish Council to re-visit the decision to remove the Jungle Climbing Frame.

Thank you for your patience and I now open the meeting for general discussion:

Mr Brian Clark of Keble Park North complained that the Parish Council did not publicise the plans for the play area before construction began. He was annoyed that local residents were not aware of the proposed design of the park and because they did not get involved at the planning stage, certain pieces of equipment have been built which now compromise their privacy. A petition of local residents affected in this way was raised and presented to the Parish Council, which called for security measures to be put in place and also for the protection of residents' privacy. The petition did not ask for the removal of the Jungle Climbing Frame – this was the suggestion of the Parish Council. In principal, Mr Clark stated that he had no objections to a play area in Keble Park but primarily wished for his privacy to be protected.

Mrs Justin Andrew of Copmanthorpe Lane enquired if the Parish Council had met the demands of the petition by erecting a new fence and installing gates.

Cllr. Harrison confirmed that in the last Parish Council meeting held on the 23rd March, the closed section of the meeting was adjourned to allow the public who remained present to comment on proposals regarding the fence. It was agreed that a 1.8 metre wooden fence would provide sufficient privacy to surrounding houses and that security gates would be installed.

Mr Kelvin Neale of Beech Avenue argued that the Parish Council agreed four points of action at the last meeting: erection of a fence; installation of security gates; repositioning the slide and removal of the Jungle Climbing Frame.

Cllr. Harrison stated that in light of new evidence, the Parish Council is obliged to reconsider these decisions. It is clear that there is considerable support from residents in the village for the Jungle Climbing Frame to remain in its original position in the park and therefore it is necessary to debate the matter at this meeting.

Mr Brian Clark of Keble Park North stated that a 1.8 metre fence would be insufficient to provide an adequate level of privacy in his garden.

Ms Clare Woodall of Keble Park North stated that the Jungle Climber overlooks her property and that she has had no complaints with children using the play area. She thanked the Parish Council for building the park.

Mr Alan McDermott of Beech Avenue complained of evening noise from the play area, which has necessitated calls to the Police. Mr McDermott also reported noise nuisance from squeaking swings.

Cllr. Harrison confirmed that the play area will be closed every evening at 7.30pm. Should anyone enter the park after this time, he urged residents to contact the Police directly, to report trespass on private property.

Ms Vicki Wilson of Keble Park North stated that she has no complaints to report relating to the play area, which adjoins her property. She explained that she moved to Bishopthorpe two years ago from Copmanthorpe where she lived close to their play area. Initially there were teething problems with anti-social behaviour but these soon disappeared as the play area became established. Ms Wilson asked that residents support the Bishopthorpe play area and allow it to become integrated in the community.

Mr Jacob Burtenshaw of Coda Avenue (minor) reported that he enjoys playing in the park. He assured the meeting that following the installation of the gates the noise will lessen at unsociable hours and any potential 'trouble-makers' will go elsewhere in the village.

Mr David Burtenshaw of Coda Avenue reminded the meeting that the Parish Council has an important lesson to learn from the way in which it have handled this project and generated negative feelings amongst residents. He stated that very few people in the village have complete privacy in their back gardens and that tolerance and respect for their neighbours are the ingredients that promote harmony. A level of tolerance should be strived for in the play area: children should be taught to respect local residents and in turn, those residents should tolerate the children.

Cllr. Harrison assured Mr Burtenshaw that the Parish Council has learnt valuable lessons from the way in which the project has been handled. However, he confirmed that the Parish Council publish the minutes in Bishopthorpe Library every month and put them on bish.net. A monthly update is published in Link magazine, which has a publication run extending to over one third of the village. It was stressed that communication was a two way process and urged all residents to read the minutes and articles available. Every Parish Council meeting has a public section, which is open to any questions or queries local residents wish to raise. It would be impossible, both logistically and financially, for the Parish Council to leaflet-drop each household on a monthly basis with a newsletter.

Ms Clare Woodall of Keble Park North commented that she let her dogs out in her garden one night when there was noise coming from the park. The youths dispersed.

Sergeant Andrew Haigh assured the meeting that the Police will respond to any 'after-hours' calls.

Mr Martin Grainger of Lang Road supported the Parish Council decision to build the play area and stated that it was backed by a majority of residents in the village. Fencing, gating and monitoring of the area should help to reduce any potential problems and he called for situation to be monitored over time.

Cllr. Harrison confirmed that it is not the intention of the Parish Council to abandon the play area once construction has been completed. It will be checked regularly for safety reasons and monitored closely over the coming months. The Parish Council want to provide a safe place for the children of Bishopthorpe to play in: it was never the intention to upset local residents.

A resident not on the electoral roll from Sim Balk Lane asked Sergeant Andrew Haigh for an update of current crimes figures directly relating to the play area.

Sergeant Andrew Haigh responded by stating that no crime has so far been committed. Some incidents of anti-social behaviour have been reported but it has not been possible for the Police to attend all of these due to reported crime prioritisation. The Police are aware of local youths who may be using the park irresponsibly and Sergeant Andrew Haigh assured the meeting that any incidents will be robustly dealt with by the Police. Current crime levels are low in Bishopthorpe and although the play area has not had an ideal start, gating and improved security measures should improve the situation.

Mrs Carol Smyth of Beech Avenue informed the meeting that the noise from children using the play area has blighted her life. She stated that the Jungle Climbing Frame is too high and that the noise generated by screaming children is breaking regulations set by Environment Health. Children have thrown stones at her dogs and have sworn at her on regular occasions. She stated that a closing time of 7.30pm is too late and that her family will not be able to relax at home in a peaceful environment after work.

Mrs Tanya Coxon of Montague Road reported a problem with rubbish in the play area and said that it has recently been collected by volunteers. She asked if the Council would be installing litterbins.

Cllr. Harrison thanked Mrs Coxon and any other residents for removing rubbish from the park and commented that he had also removed rubbish but explained that if the Parish Council installed litterbins the City Council would not empty them. The only way the City Council will empty the bins is if the Ward Committee install them. It is unfortunate that Cllr. John Galvin is not at the meeting tonight to give further details regarding this process but Cllr. Harrison urged residents to vote in favour of bins on the next Ward Committee information circular. Currently it is necessary to stress to everyone to take any litter home with you.

Mrs Helen Dudley of Copmanthorpe Lane said that as a mother to ten and twelve year old boys, she would be horrified to think that they would be throwing stones and swearing at local residents. She questioned whether the giving residents cameras to record such incidents might be a good idea so that parents could take action in the first instance.

Mrs Nicola Graham of Coda Avenue described how her garden borders Ferry Lane Sports field and stated that the noise generated by playing children was perfectly acceptable to her. She commented that 7.30pm is a reasonable time to close the play area.

Mr Shane Snowden of Keble Park North wished to thank the Parish Council for building a 'fantastic' amenity for village children. He further reminded the meeting that this plot of land has always been a designated play area and is described as such on the Ordinance Survey map.

Mrs Tracey Kilby of Canons Court explained that her mother lives in Keble Close, commented that the play area is 'much needed' in the village and thanked the Parish Council for building it. Mrs Kilby said that she appreciated the concerns of those residents most affected by the play area. However, she fears that if she is not present to supervise her child playing, he may be bullied by children from outside the village. She also reported that there appears to be unsuitable litter in the park.

Cllr. Harrison replied by asking all parents to supervise their children as appropriate.

Mr Martin Eason of Keble Park South asked if the money which had been set aside to move the Jungle Climbing Frame, could now be diverted to protect the privacy of those houses most affected.

Cllr. Harrison confirmed that a fence is in the process of being erected and that gates will be installed shortly. There are measures in place for locking the gate each evening and with villagers' support, it is hoped that this will help to provide privacy and security for those residents surrounding the play area.

Mr Brian Clark of Keble Park North complained that the height of the fence at 1.8 metres is insufficient to protect his privacy if the Jungle Climbing Frame is not moved.

Sergeant Andrew Haigh confirmed that if the Police are called to attend to a reported disturbance in the play area, names of the offenders are taken. He assured the meeting that the majority of youths are local to Bishopthorpe and are well known to the Police.

Cllr. Mrs Thornton stressed that the Parish Council is able to change a decision made in a previous meeting if new information becomes known. Therefore, in response to the public feeling regarding the Jungle Climbing Frame, a meeting was called tonight to determine the way forward. Cllr. Mrs Thornton stated that the option to move the Jungle Climbing Frame has been explored in recent weeks and is not feasible. If the apparatus is taken down, it will be reclaimed by the City Council and lost to Bishopthorpe.

Many people have attended tonight's meeting to support the decision to retain the Jungle Climbing Frame in its present position and the Parish Council is willing to take measures to ensure that the privacy of local residents affected by this decision will be protected as much as is feasibly possible. Therefore, to conclude the debate, Cllr. Mrs Thornton proposed that the decision taken at the Parish Council meeting of the 23rd March to remove the Jungle Climbing Frame should be reversed. Cllr. Harrison seconded this proposal and the Parish Councillors voted unanimously in favour.

Cllr. Harrison confirmed that the Jungle Climbing Frame would stay in the play area in its original position. He thanked members of the public for attending tonight and in particular Sergeant Andrew Haigh for attending on his day off. Alan Green was also thanked for allowing the Parish Council the use of his PA system and for his help setting it up on the night.

The meeting ended at 8.07pm

Date and time of next meeting Tuesday 27th April 2010 at 7.00pm in the Village Hall