

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

GROUND AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 1930 HOURS

Present: Councillors: R Berry (Chair)
S Jones
G Perham (substituting for T Morris)
A Dodwell (substituting for F Kharawala)
V Harvey
A Gray
P Snelling
D Bowater (substituting for B Spurr)

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio (Town Clerk)
I Haynes (Head of Grounds & Environmental Services)
S Sandiford (Head of Democratic and Central Services)

Members of the public: 0

63/GE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors F Kharawala (substituted by Councillor A Dodwell), T Morris (substituted by Councillor G Perham) and B Spurr (substituted by Councillor D Bowater).

64/GE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests, including the nature of those interests, which they had in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

Councillor Harvey declared a personal interest as a member of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth.

65/GE QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

66/GE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee received the draft minutes of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee meeting held on 2 March 2020.

Councillor Harvey advised the Committee that the planters in Rosebery Avenue were doing well.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 2 March 2020 be approved

as a correct record and would be signed at a later date when safe to do so.

67/GE COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORKPLAN

(a) The Committee received the objectives and workplan for the current municipal year. Three items originally planned for September had been deferred to December due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was requested that a date be scheduled for discussion of the Green Wheel Masterplan; this would be added to the December meeting.

A question was asked about why allotments were not included on the work plan. Management of the allotments was an ongoing departmental task. Inspections had recently re-started after having been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Town Council would help clear plots where necessary, during the Autumn and had already offered assistance to a couple of plot holders who had been shielding due to the virus. The waiting list had been at around 30 earlier in the year but had seen a disproportionate increase during the lockdown period, to the current number of 174. Enquirers were being contacted prior to being added to the list and were being advised of a likely 2 year wait for a plot (based on average turnover). It was agreed to add an allotment update to the work plan for March 2021.

A query was raised about dog waste; this had been an issue previously but it was now acceptable to put dog waste into ordinary waste bins. It was clarified that waste bins of all types on the High Street were the responsibility of Central Bedfordshire Council.

A question was asked regarding prioritisation of the Committee's objectives as set out in the work plan (taken from the Council's Five Year Plan). This was reviewed each March when the Committee considered the draft work plan for the following municipal year. Objectives were also driven by the projects identified by Council in the five year financial plan.

A question was asked regarding whether the COVID-19 pandemic had had an adverse impact on remaining burial capacity in the Town Council cemeteries. Impact to date had been minimal with 500+ spaces remaining. The agreement for Central Bedfordshire Council to use Town Council burial space during the pandemic, if needed, remained in place and this meant the local authority would then assist the Town Council in seeking additional cemetery land.

It was noted that the car park at Linslade Memorial Playing Field was starting to again become more widely used and a question asked about parking enforcement through Central Bedfordshire Council. The lack of response from the highways authority was disappointing and would be followed up.

RESOLVED to note the Committee work plan for 2020-2021.

(b) The Committee received and noted the decisions made by the Committee between 20 March – 30 June 2020 in accordance with the decision making process agreed by Council on 20 March 2020.

RESOLVED to note the decisions made by Committee between 20 March – 30 June 2020 in accordance with the decision-making process agreed by Council on 20 March 2020.

68/GE THREE MONTH BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received a three-month budget monitoring report for the period April- June 2020. Other than the loss of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were no issues to bring to the attention of the Committee. It was however noted that the higher than usual quantities of litter and waste removal might have an impact on the waste management revenue budget for the year.

RESOLVED to note the report.

69/GE INVESTMENT IN LEISURE FACILITIES

The Committee received and considered a recommendation from Policy and Finance Committee regarding the installation of public access table tennis tables in some of the Council's parks. This was a suggestion which had arisen in the 2019/20 survey of young people, but table tennis was a family-friendly multi-generational activity which would benefit the wider community, and which was not currently available. Whilst the initial cost of the tables and concrete footprints was high, long term maintenance was low and the likely lifespan was 20+ years.

Questions were asked regarding the exact proposed locations in Parson's Close Recreation Ground and Linslade Memorial Playing Field, the likely impact of weather conditions on use and whether options could be explored for the provision of bats and balls.

On being proposed and seconded, the recommendations were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED:

(a) To note the report.

(b) To endorse the installation of 5 x green concrete table tennis tables with rounded corners on 4m x 8m concrete slabs with a maximum budget of £25,000 (to be taken from 9024/950 with available funds of £80,474).

70/GE PARSON'S CLOSE RECREATION GROUND

The Committee received and considered a report regarding re-commencing the tender process for design and delivery of an inclusive adventure playground for Parson's Close Recreation Ground. The process had previously been approved and commenced, but had been put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was clarified that the playground would be on the same footprint as the existing play area and that specific groups were involved in the design to ensure suitability for all needs.

On being proposed and seconded, the recommendations were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To note the report.**
- (b) To endorse that restrictive tenders be invited for the design and build of an inclusive adventure playground for Parson's Close Recreation Ground.**

71/GE FEES AND CHARGES

(a) The Committee received a report regarding pricing of the newly installed memorialisation options in the cemeteries, including the columbarium and Tree of Remembrance. It was agreed that the new memorialisation options represented improvements to the cemeteries and gave bereaved residents choices in how they wished to remember loved ones.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to note the report.**
- (ii) to endorse the fees and timed leases as set out in the report.**

(b) The Committee received a report regarding pavilion hire fees and charges. The fees for 2020-21 had been agreed by Committee in December 2019 for implementation in April 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic no bookings had been processed between April – August. Bookings had recommenced from 5 September but it was clear that the restricted hall capacities and the requirement for additional cleaning measures were proving challenging for hirers. In light of these difficulties and to encourage use of the pavilions, it was proposed to grant a temporary discount until 31 December 2020 and for the Committee to reconsider the position at its December meeting.

RESOLVED to approve temporary amendments to 2020-21 Fees and Charges for pavilion hires during the period 5 September – 31 December 2020 as follows:

- (i) a discount of 50% be applied to the previously agreed fees and charges for this financial year, for bookings to regular hirers taking place between 5 September -31 December 2020. This includes the off-peak and charitable/not for profit discounted rates.**
- (ii) that each hirer be granted a free half-hour immediately prior to and immediately after their chargeable hire period to allow for the enhanced cleaning required by COVID-19 guidelines.**
- (iii) that the above arrangements be reviewed by the Committee at its next meeting on 14 December 2020.**

72/GE CAFÉ IN THE PARK

The Committee received and considered correspondence from Community Action Bedfordshire in respect of the 2020/21 fees for the Café in the Park concession and the ice cream concession in Parson's Close Recreation Ground. Due to not being able to open from March-June due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the question was asked whether fees could be reduced or waived for the 2020/21 season.

The Committee recognised that the concessions had been unable to operate for three months due to the pandemic but also recognised that the park had been well used since lockdown ended, particularly with the good summer weather and the re-opening of the park facilities. It was also noted that the Café in the Park had an advantage in this situation as customers might be more comfortable using an outdoor café than an indoor one for safety reasons.

It was agreed to request additional information from Community Action Bedfordshire, including income information, before making a decision on fees for 2020/21. If necessary an additional meeting could be called before the next scheduled meeting in December.

RESOLVED to request additional information from Community Action Bedfordshire before considering further the concession fees for 2020/21.

73/GE HIGH STREET PLANTERS

The Committee received and considered a motion proposed by Councillor Harvey: In support of Central Bedfordshire Council's temporary pedestrianisation of the High Street, that Leighton-Linslade Town Council takes on the responsibility for planting and maintaining the four planters that Central Bedfordshire Council has purchased and can be found in Lake Street, Market Square and Church Square respectively. That Central Bedfordshire Council agree and where necessary position the planters in their preferred locations and thereafter the Town Council take on their on-going maintenance. In order to encourage greater footfall, that the Town Council also makes better use of its own town centre located planters by providing an attractive floral display in the common interests of local businesses and the regular markets alike. The motion was seconded by Councillor Perham.

Whilst all Committee members expressed support for enhanced greening and floral displays in the High Street, disappointment was expressed that the Town Council had not been able to influence the decision on what type of planters to install. The planters installed by Central Bedfordshire Council did not have a water reservoir and therefore would require more frequent watering than was ideal. The planters were also not in keeping with the rest of the Town Council's stock, which was disappointing as it affected aesthetic continuity within the conservation area.

It was understood that Central Bedfordshire Highways officers were still considering the installation of further planters and suggested that the

Committee needed to be aware of the full picture and associated costs before agreeing to maintain the new planters.

It was proposed that the Committee defer a decision until further information was available from Central Bedfordshire Council, although this might mean planters left empty in the meantime. Rather than waiting until the December meeting, information could be brought to an additional meeting sooner, if one was held.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was not carried (two for, four against, two abstentions).

RESOLVED to seek additional information from Central Bedfordshire Council on High Street planters and for Committee to reconsider the matter further at a future meeting.

74/GE PUBLIC REALM: CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE PROPOSAL

The Committee received a public realm position statement and operating model issued by Central Bedfordshire Council in July 2020 along with a covering report. The proposal was to create four hubs within Central Bedfordshire, each housing equipment to be used for public realm improvements (e.g. graffiti removal). There were two potential operating models; a centralised model run by Central Bedfordshire Council or a devolved model whereby the hubs would receive one-off funding for the purchase of equipment which could then be used by parishes within the hub area.

It was noted that the service would be managed by the Head of Grounds in terms of prioritising, scheduling, costing and managing resources. The recent organisational change at Astral Park had created a role in which a member of staff could undertake the operational elements of the service, as well as overseeing the Town Council's pavilion buildings. The Committee was assured that no additional staffing resource would be required for this service.

Questions were raised regarding storage of equipment, managing work in other parishes, maintenance of equipment and the eventual need to replace worn equipment.

It was proposed and seconded that the devolved model be recommended to Council for consideration. On being put to the vote, the motion was carried (5 in favour, 2 against, 1 abstention).

RESOLVED to note the report.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL to endorse Option 2 – the devolved model – as set out in Central Bedfordshire Council's Public Realm Position Statement and Operating Model and to accept circa £100,000 for the purchase of the relevant and appropriate equipment, to deliver a town ranger/public realm service for Leighton-Linslade and to surrounding parishes namely, Billington, Eggington, Stanbridge, Hockliffe, Heath and Reach, Gattlesden, Potsgrove, Milton Bryan, Woburn, Aspley Health, Aspley Guise, Husborne Crawley Parish Councils.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL that subject to agreement of the above, to delegate authority to the Town Clerk as the Proper Officer to sign the Terms and Conditions or the arrangement as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding between Leighton-Linslade Town Council and Central Bedfordshire Council.

75/GE TREE PLANTING SCHEMES

The Committee received and considered a report to provide members with the timescale and procedure for a public consultation, in accordance with the principles of the Town Council's Community Engagement Strategy, on possible tree planting at Pages Field and Vandyke Playing Field.

The Committee recognised the value of planting additional trees but noted it was also important to maintain open spaces for activities such as kite flying.

In order to give residents options upon which to comment, it was requested that two or three different indicative layouts for tree planting on the sites be developed.

RESOLVED:

(a) To note the report.

(b) To endorse the timescale and procedure for public consultation in respects of possible tree planting schemes at Vandyke Road Playing Field and at Pages Field, as set out in the report.

76/GE SPORTS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLAN UPDATE

The Committee received a draft revised version of the Sport and Physical Activity Development Plan for comment. It was suggested that since this was a long and comprehensive document, that an executive summary at the front would be useful. Further work would be done and the final revised draft brought back to a future meeting.

RESOLVED to note the report.

77/GE PROJECTS AND SERVICE AREA UPDATE

The Committee received a verbal report regarding recently completed projects including the refurbishment of the Pages Park play area and the installation of the adult outdoor gym at Linslade Memorial Playing Field, which had been half funded by Central Bedfordshire Council. The drinking water fountain project was on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic and would need careful consideration.

The Grounds and Environmental Services team was providing normal services and the Grounds Supervisor had recently resumed work after extended illness. Disproportionately high levels of litter in almost every park had been a significant problem during the summer but had now returned to more normal levels. It was noted that a social media campaign had taken place promoting responsible disposal of litter and that this message was also included on the electronic signs.

RESOLVED to note the update.

78/GE TEN YEAR PLANNED MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME

The Committee received a report on the ten-year planned maintenance programme and considered the recommendations contained therein.

RESOLVED:

(a) to note the report.

(b) that a more detailed financial report be brought back to this Committee at its December meeting.

79/GE REVIEW OF POSSIBLE PRIORITY PROJECTS FOR INCLUSION IN THE 2021-2022 BUDGET

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

The meeting closed at 2200 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2020.

Chair

14 DECEMBER 2020