

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF GROUNDS & ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 8 MARCH 2021 AT 7.30 PM

Present: Councillors R Berry (Chair)
 S Jones (Vice-Chair)
 T Morris
 F Kharawala
 B Spurr
 V Harvey
 A Gray
 P Snelling

Also in attendance: M Saccoccio, Town Clerk
 I Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental
 Services
 S Sandiford, Head of Democratic and Central
 Services
 M Jahn, Committee Officer
 Cllr G Perham

Members of the public: 4
Members of the press 0

100/GE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence had been received.

101/GE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No pecuniary interests were declared.

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

102/GE QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

Three members of the public spoke, the first being the Chairman of the Leighton-Linslade Allotment Association to seek clarification on 'what a worked plot was' and whether the rules for re-allocating plots could be revised to enable them to be offered to new tenants within a shorter timescale than at present. Thanks were given to the Head of Grounds and the Grounds team for their continued work in clearing allotments and it was hoped discussions would progress the concerns mentioned above.

A second question was raised by an allotment holder at Weston Avenue asking whether it was the Town Council's intention to continue to provide

piped water to both allotment sites, irrespective of any allocation of water butts to some plot holders under this proposed scheme. It was confirmed that mains water would continue to be supplied to both sites with no plans to discontinue.

A third question was raised regarding the perimeter fence at the rear of Linslade Memorial Playing Field, which had fallen into disrepair and whether this would be repaired and by whom. It was confirmed that discussions were being held with the Canal and River Trust regarding ownership of the land and fence and until ownership was established no temporary repair would be made by the Town Council due to concerns about vicarious liability. The Head of Grounds would bring a detailed report to the Committee once a reply had been received from the Canal and River Trust and a solution explored.

103/GE **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

(a) The Committee received the draft minutes of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee meeting held on 14 December 2020.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 14 December be approved as a correct record and would be signed at a later date when safe to do so.

(b) Minute reference 89/GE Committee Objectives and Workplan – a question was asked about tree planting intentions. The Town Council's consultation for tree planting options on Pages Field and Vandyke Road Playing Field would take place once Covid restrictions allowed. The decision to apply to the Central Bedfordshire Council tree grant scheme had been unanimously approved by Council at its meeting on 25 January 2021 and a decision was awaited.

104/GE **COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORKPLAN**

(a) The Committee received the Committee Objectives and Workplan for 2020-21 which had been completed apart from the car parking arrangements at Linslade Memorial Playing Field and this would be brought back to Committee for discussion when appropriate.

(b) The Committee received the draft Committee Workplan 2021-22. A question was raised regarding the health and safety issues of the broken fence at Linslade Memorial Playing Fields and whether this should be added to the workplan. A suggestion was made to put up temporary signage indicating the responsibility of the Canal and River Trust.

A proposal was made that as a matter of urgency pressure should be put on the Canal and River Trust to reinstate the fence and an update brought back

to Committee at the next meeting. On being taken to the vote there were 5 for, 2 against and 1 abstention.

RESOLVED to contact the Canal and River Trust as a matter of urgency to ascertain ownership and reinstatement of the fence.

RESOLVED to note the Committee objectives and work plan.

105/GE **ALLOTMENTS UPDATE**

The Committee received an update on the waiting lists for Town Council owned allotments and considered a recommendation to increase rainwater collection opportunities across both allotment sites. The recommencement of plot allocations would begin in line the HM Government's Covid-19 Response Spring 2021. It was anticipated that applicants on the waiting list would be contacted in the week commencing 15 March, to ensure that available plots would be let as soon as lifting of restrictions allowed.

A question was raised regarding the provision of new allotment sites and when these would be available. The planned sites on the East of Leighton development would assist with the shortfall in allotments and Central Bedfordshire Council would inform the Town Council when this could be progressed.

A question was raised on the introduction of water butts to the allotments. It was suggested that they be introduced in two phases of 60 in each phase, rather than 120 in one allocation. On voting this was agreed and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED

(a) To note the report.

(b) To note the present waiting list.

(c) To allocate up to maximum of £5,000 from earmarked reserve 9106/950 (allotments), with current available funds of £8,429, to purchase 120 x water butt c/w lid, tap, stand and diverter kit to be given to the Leighton-Linslade Allotment Association in two phases of 60 in each phase.

106/GE **PLAY AREA PROGRAMME**

The Committee received an update on the wider play area improvement and safer surfacing replacement programmes. The refurbishment of Pages Park Play area was completed and well received. The next projects to be considered were the play area at Alwins Field and the resurfacing of the Splash and Play facility in Parson's Close Recreation Ground.

RESOLVED

- (a) to note the report.**
- (b) to endorse the updated wider play area improvement and safer surfacing replacement programmes as per the provided gantt charts.**

107/GE NINE MONTH BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received the nine-month budget monitoring report for the period April – December 2020. It was hoped that sport would be able to re-start once restrictions were lifted and that next year the income would return to previous levels. However, the year had finished on budget, even with the problems caused by the pandemic.

RESOLVED to note the report.

108/GE CONCESSIONS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Committee received the draft minutes of the Concessions Task & Finish Group held on 17 December 2020. A second meeting was due to take place.

RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the Concessions Task & Finish Group held on 17 December 2020.

109/GE NON-DOMESTIC RATE BILLS FOR PAGES PARK PAVILION

The Committee received and considered a report on non-domestic rate bills for Pages Park Pavilion.

RESOLVED

- (a) to endorse that £13,836.36 be paid to Central Bedfordshire Council for back dated non-domestic rate bills for 2017/2018 – 2020/2021, payment to be made from 9024/950 with available funds of £56,290.**
- (b) To endorse that non-domestic rate bill for 2021/2022 be paid to Central Bedfordshire Council, payment to be made from 9024/950 once figure is known circa £4,000.**
- (c) To endorse that the 2022/23 Grounds and Environmental Services budget has monies made available for future non-domestic rate bills for Pages Park Pavilion.**

110/GE COVID-19 UPDATE

- (a) Members received an update in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic and implications for Town Council owned play areas, parks, sports facilities and pavilions since the 4-step road map had been introduced by the government.**

On 21 June 2021 the spraying of play areas could be stopped and most of the sports activities should be up and running by 17 May. However, it was still unclear how indoor sports would operate as social distancing and face coverings would not be assessed until at least 21 June.

A concern was raised regarding the potential impact on local parks of a further increase in use over the Easter period and whether there was a way to encourage responsible use. It was agreed responsible use and appropriate social distancing could be promoted with suggestions of activities where the restrictions could be adhered to.

(b) A proposal was made for all fees for sports related activities to be waived for two months, from the time town council venues become available. On being taken to the vote it was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED that fees and charges for all sport related activities be held in abeyance for two months from the time that our venues become available under the Government's COVID-19 regulations

111/GE **PAVILION HIRE FEES AND CHARGES**

The Committee received and considered a report to extend the temporary amendments to the previously agreed fee structure to support the re-introduction of community activities in Town Council pavilion buildings, when allowed to do so by the Government.

RESOLVED to extend the continued temporary amendments to fees and charges for pavilion hire for the period 1 April – 30 June 2021 as set out.

The meeting was adjourned at 20:56 hours and reconvened at 21:02 hours.

112/GE **CEMETERY FEES AND CHARGES**

The Committee received and considered a report for a zero increase in the 2021/2022 cemetery fees.

RESOLVED:

(a) To note the report.

(b) To approve a zero increase in cemetery fees and charges for 2021/2022 with the expectation that this be reviewed in 12 months' time.

113/GE **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL RIVER CLEARANCE (ONE-YEAR REVIEW)**

The Committee received and considered a report regarding the continuation

of shared responsibility for clearing a section of the River Ouzel. Members agreed that the shared responsibility for this site, with Town Council engagement, had made a huge difference to the area and in principle this should continue, with a formalised arrangement over a 3-year period. On-going to the vote it was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED

- (a) To note the report.**
- (b) To carefully consider the creation of a Service Level Agreement (or equivalent) between Central Bedfordshire Council, the Town Council and third-party landholding interests in order to provide an on-going commitment to the clearing of the river Ouzel and the west bank between Leighton Road and the rear of Leighton Buzzard ALDI.**
- (c) That the costs of clearance be equitably shared between all parties to represent landholding interest and associated responsibility.**

114/GE OUZEL VALLEY PARK STEERING GROUP

The Committee received the draft minutes of the Ouzel Valley Park Steering Group meeting held on 1 February 2021 for consideration and a verbal update was given by the Chair of the steering group.

Minute reference 5 (Information Updates) – it was confirmed a letter had been sent by the Town Clerk to Anglian Water regarding the quality of the water in the River Ouzel but to date no reply had been received. It was hoped to bring an update to the next Ouzel Valley Park Steering Group meeting.

Minute reference 5 (Greensand Trust) - although the Greensand Ridge walk marker project had been delayed, an artist was now designing signs and this would be presented to the next meeting of the steering group.

Minute reference 9 (Tiddenfoot Waterside Park) – derelict stable block – it had been agreed to discuss this further at a future meeting of the Partnership Committee in respects of funding and likely costs.

RESOLVED to receive the draft minutes of the Ouzel Valley Park Steering Group meeting held on 1 February 2021.

115/GE EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that, under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded on the grounds of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. The public and press to withdraw from the meeting during consideration of detailed discussion regarding: Parson's Close Recreation Ground and Town Council vehicles.

116/GE PARSON'S CLOSE RECREATION GROUND

The Committee received a report regarding Parson's Close Recreation Ground – Adventure Playground.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To note the report.**
- (b) To approve and endorse the proposed scheme design and therefore the chosen supplier is HAGS UK.**
- (c) To approve a 6-week period of positive public engagement to help facilitate a potential public work loan application, to ensure that the preferred option meets public expectation in terms of play value and inclusivity.**
- (d) To recommend to the Policy & Finance Committee that it considers the funding options to deliver this £297,947.00 project and to consider funding through the United Kingdom Debt Management Office via a Public Work Loan or from Town Council held reserves.**

117/GE TOWN COUNCIL VEHICLES

The Committee received and considered a recommendation made by Policy and Finance Committee on 18 January 2021 in respect of town council vehicles. A protocol would be created to set out expectations of third parties when using Town Council assets in support of any operation they are carrying out on behalf of the parish. On being put to the vote this was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To note the report.**
- (b) To consider the recommendation made by the Policy and Finance Committee on 18 January 2021 in respect of Town Council vehicles and to determine that no further action is required.**

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 8 MARCH 2021.

Chair

7 JUNE 2021