

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL

GROUNDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

MONDAY 9 SEPTEMBER 2019 AT 1930 HOURS

Present: Councillors: R Berry (Chair)
S Jones
T Morris
A Dodwell (substituting for J D'Este-Hoare)
F Kharawala
B Spurr
V Harvey
A Gray
P Snelling

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

15/GE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J D'Este-Hoare, substituted by Councillor A Dodwell.

16/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. No declarations were made and no dispensations had been requested.

17/GE QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from the public.

18/GE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Committee received the draft minutes of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee meeting held on 10 June 2019.

Minute reference 5/GE – it was agreed to follow up with Central Bedfordshire Council regarding options for management of car parking at the Mentmore Park and Memorial Gardens car park.

Minute reference 7/GE – a verbal update was given regarding allotments. New signage had been installed on both sites, incorporating a noticeboard

for use by the Allotment Association. Work to clear sites had been undertaken in-house and all vacant plots had been offered, meaning 95% average occupancy across the two sites and a minimal waiting list of 12-13 people, none of whom had been on the waiting list for longer than a couple of months.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee held on 10 June 2019 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

19/GE COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORK PLAN

The Committee received the objectives and work plan for the current municipal year.

A query was raised regarding the proposed update on waste and recycling scheduled for the 2 March 2020 meeting. It was anticipated that following the start of the new contract at the end of October 2019, the first batch of data from the supplier would have come through by the March meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED to note the Committee work plan and objectives for 2019-2020.

20/GE PROJECTS UPDATE

The Committee received a verbal update on a number of ongoing projects and noted that work was due to be undertaken to repair faulty play equipment in Parson's Close Recreation Ground as well as re-fencing the tennis court and basketball court at Pages Park. Longer term projects included the potential building of a second mausoleum, the skate park and the potential new sites included in the East of Leighton-Linslade housing development at Chamberlains Barn.

The Committee was advised by Councillor Spurr that a woodland or green cemetery at Rushmere was still considered inappropriate for the site for the same reasons as originally given several years ago.

RESOLVED to note the information.

21/GE PAGES PARK PAVILION REFURBISHMENT UPDATE

The Committee received a verbal update in respect of the refurbishment of the pavilion building at Pages Park. Work continued at a rapid pace and was currently ahead of schedule with external paths complete, windows and external doors to be installed shortly and plastering underway. The building would have a lighter, more airy feel due to the removal of the suspended ceiling and installation of floor to ceiling windows. Photographs were shown of the project to date and it was noted that the refurbishment was on course for completion as scheduled, around 8 November.

A query was raised regarding the Pages Park Play Café; it was anticipated that they would be moving back to Pages Park as soon as refurbishment works were complete.

A query was raised regarding the potential to install a pétanque piste or terrain at Pages Park. It was understood that the cost for a piste (suitable for one game) would be around £14,000 and therefore the cost for a terrain (suitable for two or more games) was anticipated to be nearer £30,000. It was felt that fencing would be necessary, which would be at an additional cost. There was no scope within the Pages Park refurbishment project budget for this but further consideration could be given to it at a later date.

RESOLVED to note the information.

22/GE CHILDREN'S FUNERAL FUND

The Committee received information regarding recent legislation on the Children's Funeral Fund for England, a scheme whereby bereaved parents, carers or guardians would no longer have to pay the fees charged for cremation or burial of a child under the age of 18 years. Whilst this would predominantly be dealt with by funeral directors, in some cases the Town Council did deal direct with bereaved families and would therefore ensure that families were made aware of the option to access the Fund.

The Committee noted the information and expressed the hope that both training and support were in place to assist staff having to deal with such potentially harrowing situations.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the report.**
- (ii) To acknowledge the introduction of The Social Fund (Children's Funeral Fund for England) Regulations 2019.**
- (iii) To note the change in procedure whereby in situations where the Town Council was dealing directly with families, officers would ensure the families were aware of their choice to access the Fund and if taken up, would apply to the Fund for reimbursement of the appropriate fees.**

23/GE REVIEW OF GREEN FLAG AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee received the judge's reports from the Green Flag judging of Pages Park, Parson's Close Recreation Ground and Vandyke Road Cemetery and noted that feedback on Linslade Recreation Ground was still awaited. All four Green Flags had been retained for 2019 and the judges' reports included positive feedback and comments.

In respect of the judges' comments on the site management plans, it was felt that the plans were appropriate and fit for purpose, although recognised that plans for some sites elsewhere within the region were significantly longer and more detailed.

Any recommendations arising from the Green Flag judging would come back to Committee at a later date, after consideration of financial and resourcing implications and where appropriate, be included within the budget setting process.

It was noted that a response was outstanding from Central Bedfordshire Council on the footpaths and lighting within Parson's Close Recreation Ground. The pathways were of particular concern given the use by cyclists and members of Junior Parkrun.

It was suggested that the Council should raise awareness of the positive comments made by the Green Flag judges.

RESOLVED to note the reports.

24/GE INTERPRETATION PANELS IN THE PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

The Committee received a report regarding the design of meaningful, innovative and interactive interpretation panels as well as signage for a number of the Town Council's parks and green spaces. In order to ensure designs which would be appropriate to each site and appealing to all ages, it was proposed that the design work be outsourced to a specialist supplier. Designs would then come back to Committee for final approval.

The question of whether it would be appropriate to consider sponsorship was raised. It was also noted that ongoing maintenance costs needed to be considered within the annual revenue budget.

The potential to perhaps include parks and open spaces as a trail was suggested.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the report.**
- (ii) To endorse expenditure of up to a maximum of £50,000 from Earmarked Reserve 9024/950 to fund the interpretation panels in the parks and open spaces project (subject to Committee approval of proposed designs).**
- (iii) To delegate authority to the Town Clerk to incur expenditure of up to a maximum of £10,000 for the design work for the projects outlined in the report (final designs to come back to Committee at a future meeting for approval).**

25/GE QUARTERLY BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received a budget monitoring report for the first quarter, 1 April – 30 June 2019. Overall, expenditure was slightly ahead at 29%, but income was also slightly ahead of budget for the period. The largest expenditure was for annual payments relating to vehicles and equipment and expenditure was also shown as committed for the year, for vehicles and the solar compacting bins.

Expenditure since June would appear in the next quarterly budget monitoring report.

A query was raised regarding the use of finance for the purchase of large scale equipment, rather than use of reserves, which was explained.

RESOLVED to note the report.

26/GE INCREASED MEMORIALISATION

The Committee received a report proposing the introduction of increased options for memorialisation, for those wishing to remember and commemorate their loved ones in a range of ways. Proposals included the purchase of a steel memorial tree, a columbarium and a child columbarium with character set benches.

A range of views was expressed and it was noted that the specific details of fees and charges for memorial options would need to be agreed when setting all cemetery related fees and charges at the next meeting. It was agreed to clarify whether The Childrens Fund could be accessed for child memorialisation.

The Committee expressed support for offering further memorialisation options but requested that further consideration be given to possible alternatives to the proposed steel tree. On an amendment to the recommendations being proposed and seconded, a vote was carried (8 in favour, 1 abstention).

RESOLVED:

- (i) To note the report.**
- (ii) To endorse the principle of purchasing a memorial option such as a memorial tree, but for specific options to be brought to a future meeting for the Committee to determine.**
- (iii) To endorse the purchase, supply and installation of one Columbarium at a cost of £12, 180.**
- (iv) To endorse the purchase, supply and installation of one Child Columbarium with character set benches at a cost of £10, 300.**

27/GE CEMETERY CONSULATION

The Committee received a report summarising the findings of the recent public consultation held in respect of the options available to the Town Council due to limited space remaining for interments at both cemetery sites.

It was noted that 95% of consultation respondents were in favour of the Town Council remaining a burial authority. It was noted that the option to be interred within the parish was very important to many residents, particularly long-standing or life-long residents.

The Committee expressed concern that options within the Town Council's direct control were extremely limited, given the lack of available suitable land for purchase. Land allocated within the East of Leighton-Linslade urban extension was not only outside the parish boundary, but the extent of geophysical investigations was unknown and therefore its suitability for cemetery land was uncertain, particularly given its proximity to the flood plain of Clipstone Brook.

It was agreed to seek support from the principal authority on the matter of additional burial land and to defer any further decision until at least the next meeting of the Committee. The urgency of the situation was accepted but it

was agreed that the Town Council needed to be confident that every possible avenue had been explored.

RESOLVED:

- (i) to note the key findings of the cemetery public consultation.
- (ii) to defer any further discussion until the next meeting of the Committee.
- (iii) To delegate authority to the Town Clerk to write to Central Bedfordshire Council seeking its urgent support with the matter of additional cemetery land.

28/CE 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 the Astral Park Task and Finish Group.

29/CE TASK AND FINISH GROUP ASTRAL PARK

The Committee received the draft minutes of the Astral Park Task and Finish Group meeting held on 21 August 2019, as well as a covering report and a copy of the report presented to Council in April 2019 for background information. A verbal overview was given in respect of the recommendations being put forward by the Task and Finish Group. It was noted that further recommendations would come forward to the appropriate Committee or Sub-Committee in due course.

On being proposed and seconded, the recommendations were carried (8 in favour, 1 against).

RESOLVED to endorse the budget recommendations for budget lines 111, 115 and 116 for 2020-2021 onwards, as set out within the minutes of the Astral Park Task and Finish Group meeting held on 21 August 2019.

RESOLVED to endorse that tenders be invited for the provision of profesional cleaning services for the pavilion buildings at Astral Park, Mentmore Park and Pages Park.

The meeting closed at 2119 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2019.

Chair

2 DECEMBER 2019