

# MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RECREATION GROUNDS, PUBLIC LANDS & LIGHTING COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2020, AT 7PM VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING PLATFORM

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## Committee Members present:

Mrs A Clarey, A Cooper, Mrs M Cooper (Chairman), S Hayes, Mrs J Hyde, C Phelps, G Russell, J Talbot.

## Also present:

Town Clerk – Mrs K Elliott-Turner, Councillors S Buck, B Saunders, S Dhaliwal and one member of the public (A Bainbridge, Stotfold Junior Football Club)

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### **35/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Bundock and Collier.

### **36/20 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS ON MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE AGENDA**

There were none. Members were reminded that if at any time during the meeting they feel they have an interest in an item being discussed, they should declare it at that point.

### **37/20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES**

Not at this point.

### **38/20 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION**

#### Correspondence received

- Notification has been received from Central Beds Council's Highways team that the following roads within the development known as Land South of Stotfold/Greenacres/Trinity Manor have now been adopted by Central Beds Council Highways: Marigold Way, Cowslip Drive, Bryony Drive, Angelica Avenue, Tansey Avenue, Willowherb Way, Coltsfoot Road and Teasel Lane.

#### Matters arising

Minute 30/20 – x4 litter bins have been ordered for the Arlesey Road recreation area and car park. A site meeting has been held with the Handyman to determine suitable locations – one to be fixed to concrete bike rack pad, one by the car park toilets and a third by a proposed kissing gate near the vehicle entrance. The fourth will be put in storage for future use.

Urgent attention needs to be given to the matter of the Old Brewery footpath, adjacent to the former Roecroft Lower School playing field, as there is some confusing information on the Central Beds Council website on this matter which needs further discussion. Councillor Mrs Clarey will discuss with the Clerk.

### **39/20 ARLESEY ROAD PLAYING PITCH SPACE**

Members considered a request from Stotfold Junior Football Club on the amount of pitch space they would like to use at Arlesey Road, and other public open spaces in the

town. Supporting information and diagrams were previously provided.

Andy Bainbridge of Stotfold Junior Football Club was invited to speak and answer questions on this item. In response to a query regarding the training area behind the new football ground, leased to the Football Club (of which the junior club is a part), he didn't feel this would be ready to use for another 2 years, once finance for the work has been agreed between the two parts of the club.

Discussions were held regarding the wish of the juniors to mark out and use pitches across all of the Arlesey Road site, and the council's wish to expand community use on the site to include a MUGA and play equipment. These two would be sited towards the front boundary of the site and along the boundary with the adjacent surgery.

With regard to other pitch space required, they are making enquiries to establish more pitch space, but in terms of space required in Stotfold, they would like to continue using Hitchin Road Rec, Arlesey Road, Riverside Playing Field and The Green – the latter two requiring more secure storage for goal posts going forward.

**RESOLVED** that Stotfold Junior Football Club may mark out and hire pitch space in an expanded area of Arlesey Road – to the rear of the site running from a line between the rear of Larksfield Surgery land to the football club and back towards the rear of the site.

#### **40/20 CHARGING STRUCTURE FOR STOTFOLD JUNIOR FOOTBALL CLUB**

Members considered amending the charging structure for the Junior Football Club. Currently, they are charged on a per team per season rate for The Green, Hitchin Road Recreation Ground, Riverside Playing Field and Arlesey Road. The rates for the 2020/2021 year are £80 per team per season, with casual football or other teams/clubs being charged £45 per game for adults and £25 per game for juniors.

Over the years, as the club use the space as they need, rather than booking each game or training session through the council, obtaining accurate information on number of teams using which public open space has proved very difficult for invoicing purposes.

An alternative charging structure has been suggested, to charge an annual fee for all teams to use any of the above four mentioned public open spaces as they require. However, this may preclude other teams/clubs from hiring space for their games and may cause complications for the council when booking in other uses such as fairs, circuses, car boot sales, etc. A copy of the demographics information supplied by the Junior Club was previously provided to members, which shows that over 50% of junior membership are not from Stotfold, with a further 48 under 7's joining this season. Andy Bainbridge (Stotfold Junior Football Club) confirmed that this coming season, they have 62 teams registered, although not all those will be playing on Town Council open spaces. There are 46 junior teams (under 7's to under 18's), 5 adult teams, walking football team and a veterans team. In terms of membership fees, under 7's pay £85 per season, under 18's pay £100 plus deposit to cover fines applied.

It was noted that although a good number of players do come from outside Stotfold, they are representing our town when playing, regardless of where they come from.

**RESOLVED** that Stotfold Junior Football Club is charged £5,000 (payable quarterly) for the current season (2020-2021 financial year) for 62 teams to be able to play/train on Hitchin Road Recreation Ground, Riverside Playing Field, The Green and Arlesey Road. As is currently the case, any bookings for other uses such as fairs, circuses, car

boots, etc will be taken, and advance notification will be given to the Junior Club that the pitch space may not be available or the wider open space will be shared use.

Andy Bainbridge, Stotfold Junior Football Club left the meeting at the end of this item.

#### **41/20 ARLESEY ROAD DRAINED PITCHES - MAINTENANCE**

Members considered a quote from Rik Golder Ltd, our Landscape/Grass Cutting Contractor to fertilise, chainharrow and roll the drained pitch area as part of the annual autumn/winter maintenance for the Arlesey Road site. Total £5,425 plus vat (copy of detailed quote provided to members). This work has been included in the 2020/2021 committee budget.

**RESOLVED** that the annual autumn/winter maintenance for the Arlesey Road drained pitch area, as detailed and costed by our Landscape/Grass Cutting Contractor is approved, with funds from the Arlesey Road Pitch Maintenance budget.

#### **42/20 FOR INFORMATION – UPDATE ON ARLESEY ROAD BOUNDARY WORKS AND PROVISION OF NEW KISSING GATE**

Having previously agreed to remove the trees/shrubs along the front boundary of the Arlesey Road site and replace with Duex mesh type green fencing, Central Beds Council's Assets team advise that we may now need planning permission and should also involve Highways as the boundary abuts the shared cycle/footway. Due to this additional work required and permissions needed, together with recent work being carried out on Arlesey Road itself and the creation of a new junction and road to serve the adjacent school, this work has been put on hold.

This committee previously approved the installation of palisade fencing along the boundary fronting the new school road and running either side of the vehicle entrance, with a view to also installing a kissing gate to enable safe pedestrian access. This has also been put on hold due to the school road works. As part of the junction works, a small corner of our shrub bed (where the kissing gate was originally intended to be) has been realigned to enable the shared cycle/footway to be positioned further into the school road and away from the junction with Arlesey Road at the point where it crosses the school road.

It is suggested that the works referred to above remain on hold until the school, the road serving it and the associated highway works on Arlesey Road are complete. These works can then be re-considered to ensure they are still suitable.

Members agreed that this work will currently remain on hold, to be reviewed at a suitable time.

#### **43/20 MONEY FOR TREES**

Cliff Andrews, Head of Supporting Communities at Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) advises that they have some funding available for hedge and tree planting works to be carried out this winter – this relates to the Etonbury Green Wheel project. We have previously discussed potential planting around the Arlesey Road open space and he asks if this is still desired.

Members considered planting hedging and trees at the Arlesey Road site using funding available from BRCC, or to put forward an alternative Town Council site close to or on the Etonbury Green Wheel route which could do with some habitat/landscaping enhancements. Any planting scheme may require additional funding from the Town

Council, and advice on planting should be sought from Central Beds Council's Ecologist.

It was felt that enhancing the boundary backing onto Vaughan Road would be preferable, as this area is already supporting wildlife. It was noted that the wooden fence does not follow the actual leased land boundary, and there is around 4.5 to 5m of leased land towards the rear of the Vaughan Road rear garden boundaries – this area was put forward for hedging/tree planting works to provide an enhanced wildlife habitat. There is a planting scheme along the new Pix Brook Academy site boundary already in place.

A query was raised about whether BRCC would organise a planting team, or if this is something the Town Council has to organise.

**RESOLVED** that the leased land behind the fence on the bunding between the Arlesey Road open space and the Vaughan Road rear garden boundaries is suggested as an area for hedge/tree planting works, using funding available from BRCC. The Central Beds Council Ecologist is to be asked for guidance on these proposals.

Councillors Buck and Pickering left the meeting during this item.

#### **44/20 STREET NAMING REQUESTS**

- a) Taylors Road, opposite Aspen Gardens  
Executive action has been taken by the Clerk in consultation with the Chairman of Council (under Covid-19 delegated powers) to respond before a deadline to a street naming request for 32 new dwellings at Land at Taylors Road, opposite Aspen Gardens. Their proposed names were Cherry, Maple and Leylandii. To follow our policy of a tree theme in this area of the town, the updated list of tree names was provided to Central Beds Council. They have now advised that they only required one name and Cherry Orchard has been chosen.

**RESOLVED** that the executive action taken in submitting the tree names list for Taylors Road, opposite Aspen Gardens with a decided name of Cherry Orchard, is approved.

- b) Former football club site, off The Green  
Members considered a request from Settle (housing association) for street names for the former football club site off The Green. Deadline 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020.

**RESOLVED** that the name 'Stadium Close' is proposed for the former football club site.

#### **45/20 CLEARING OF IVY FROM HITCHIN ROAD RECREATION GROUND CHANGING ROOM ROOF**

A large amount of ivy at the rear of the changing rooms has regrown following a hard cut back last year. This is a continuing problem and it has been difficult to keep the growth back. A complaint has been received from an adjacent resident about the amount of ivy that hangs over their property and the resulting large number of biting insects it attracts. As this is a repeating problem and it has encroached inside the changing room building via the roof, there was a concern that the ivy may cause structural damage over time. Members considered a quote from our Landscape/Grass Cutting Contractor, Rik Golder Ltd, to clear the ivy from the changing room roof, back and side, to use chemical on stumps to help prevent regrowth and to dispose of debris £650 plus vat.

**RESOLVED** that the quote from Rik Golder Ltd of £650 plus vat to clear the ivy from the changing room roof, back and side, is approved.

#### **46/20 FREE LET REQUEST – RIVERSIDE PLAYING FIELD**

Over the lockdown period and in recent weeks, there has been an increase in organisations booking to use our open spaces for outdoor fitness classes.

Members considered a free let request from one enquirer, who would like to provide yoga sessions at Riverside Playing Field on an attendance by voluntary donation basis. Current charge to hire open spaces for such use £10 per session.

**RESOLVED** that the free let request for yoga use is granted, for the period up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 and feedback will be required before considering any future free lets. They will be required to provide a copy of their public liability insurance and a risk assessment in order to use the space.

#### **47/20 DROVERS LANE – PEDESTRIAN ACCESS TO RIVERSIDE PLAYING FIELD**

In June this year, residents of Drovers Lane blocked up the gap in the fence between Drovers Lane and Riverside Playing Field. This gap was left by the developers Abbey Homes, following a request by residents for a pedestrian access to the public open space, and support from the Town Council because this was felt to be a safer pedestrian route into the space, rather than using the blind bend around Malthouse Lane. Central Beds Council constructed a footpath to link the gap in the fence to the public right of way in Riverside Playing Field, known as Kingfisher Way. Residents have advised that they did not feel safe now that an access had been provided through to the open space, and they boarded up the gap.

Members considered the views of the Public Rights of Way Officer, views of residents and our previous views about creating this route through, and whether we wish to take this matter further, as suggested by the Officer by contacting the landowner – Abbey Homes.

There have been previous complaints, not about specifically about the gap created in the fence, but about motorcycles accessing Riverside Playing Field via this route, and antisocial behaviour at the open space, Central Beds Council Ward Members, their Community Safety Officers, Grand Union Housing's Youth Worker and the Police have all been consulted, with visits to the site to establish any issue and suggestions put forward such as installation of staggered barriers to stop motorbikes from using the gap and footpath. The Town Council also considered the future of the shelter at the playing field but did not feel that it required removal.

**RESOLVED** that developers and landowners of the Drovers Lane development, Abbey Homes, are advised of the current situation, the history of the provision of the footpath and the gap in the boundary fence, and ask for their opinion on whether they are happy with this new action taken by residents. Also ask if Abbey Homes have any plans to transfer highways and footways in this development to Central Beds Council Highways.

#### **48/20 ADOPTION OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACES – LAND SOUTH OF STOTFOLD**

Members considered correspondence received from the Adoptions Manager of Taylor Wimpey, for the Town Council to adopt all public open space in the 'Land South of Stotfold' development (also known as Trinity Manor and Greenacres).

This council had previously advised the Taylor Wimpey/Persimmon Homes consortium that it only wished to take on the play area and public green space to the rear of the Greenacre Centre, and not other green areas which are usually adopted by highways. At previous discussions, Central Beds Council also did not want to adopt those excess strips of green space, which includes running alongside Pix Brook. However, Taylor Wimpey advise that the 2017 Deed of Variation relating to adoption of the Western Play Area (now known as Pix Brook Play Area) and the Greenacre Centre, also enabled them to transfer other green spaces direct to the Town Council, rather than offering to Central Beds Council – our solicitor confirms that this is the case. Any commuted sum is based on a calculation provided by Central Beds Council.

The Clerk reminded members of the history on this matter. Approximately 18 months to 2 years ago, the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Clerk and Central Beds Council Landscape Officer attended a site meeting with representatives of Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon Homes to view the open spaces and play area on the development. At that meeting, council's wish to only take on the play area and green park area to the rear of the Greenacre Centre was reiterated. A subsequent round-table meeting was held, where Central Beds Council advised that they did not wish to take on any open spaces within the development. The Town Council representatives reiterated our view on this.

Members are still in the view that the play area and park area to the rear of the Greenacre Centre are to be transferred to the Town Council, there are some areas we may be interested having transferred, but there were concerns about other spaces indicated on the transfer plan, such as the 'linear park' running alongside Pix Brook. It was noted however that the River Ivel Drainage Board has taken on responsibility for maintenance of this area, so ongoing maintenance and riparian rights would need to be determined.

The Clerk will make investigations into size of areas proposed for transfer in order to calculate a commuted sum, information on the current and future maintenance of the Pix Brook 'linear park' area together with riparian rights and responsibilities, and return to the committee for further consideration.

#### **49/20 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES, RELEVANT TO THIS COMMITTEE ONLY**

The inclusive roundabout at Hitchin Road Recreation Ground is not working properly again. The suppliers said that it only had a one year warranty, however we have confirmed that it is a five year warranty. They will be visiting the site to inspect the item this week.

The agenda for the next meeting (9<sup>th</sup> September) will include two large items for consideration, but if there are any items that have been deferred over the last few months, please advise the Clerk.

A broken bench on Millennium Green, and a bench that has fallen over in Centenary Wood are being repaired and repositioned by Teasel.

There has been no further information progress of the public art for Greenacre Park, since we were advised that the stone was stuck in Portugal. The Clerk will chase for an update.

With regard the bench and the lamppost that were knocked down by a van, the Handyman is unable to pull out the bench as it is the heavy concrete type. A public

footpath sign was also knocked down, this will be reported to Central Beds Council – the sign should point towards Bowmans Mill, Astwick.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.59pm

**MINUTES APPROVED (date):**

**SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN:**