

MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE RECREATION GROUNDS, PUBLIC LANDS & LIGHTING COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 14TH OCTOBER 2020, AT 7PM

Committee Members present:

Mrs S Bundock, Mrs A Clarey, B Collier A Cooper, Mrs M Cooper (Chairman), S Hayes, Mrs J Hyde, C Phelps, J Talbot.

Also present:

Town Clerk – Mrs K Elliott-Turner

62/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received. Councillor Russell absent without apologies.

63/20 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS ON MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE AGENDA

Councillor Talbot declared an interest in item 7 relating to allotment fees, as his wife has an allotment plot at the Common Road site. 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.

64/20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES

None present.

65/20 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION

Clerk's Report

For information, there has been a change in the highways team, with Principal Highways Officer, Rick Thompson looking now after Stotfold. Nick Carofalo still has overall responsibility for the North area as a whole and will deal with escalations as required.

Correspondence received

Nothing to report as at production of agenda.

Matters arising

Minute 55/20 – a utilities check has been carried out by Central Beds Council on the green triangle in Trinity Road, which confirms that a memorial bench may be sited in the central part of the green. The resident has confirmed which bench they would like, and this is of the public realm type, of sturdy construction and made of recycled plastic. The bench has been ordered, the resident will be invoiced, and a site meeting is being arranged with the resident and our Handyman to determine an appropriate site which doesn't compromise nearby utilities.

Minute 56/20 - Nick Doolan, Senior Public Transport Officer, Central Beds Council, confirms that the bus shelter on The Green, opposite The Crown public house, will be removed in the next 8 weeks.

Minute 57/20 – advice has been sought from Paul Salmon, Team Leader, Traffic Management, Central Beds Council, as to how safety for pedestrians and drivers might be improved in the Mill Lane area.

Minute 58/20 – a request has been made to Grand Union Housing, as the owners of the Vaughan Road garages, to block off the unauthorised access point between the garages and the sub-station so there is no access from there to Central Beds Council owned land at the rear of the Pix Brook Academy and onto Town Council leased land at Arlesey Road.

Minute 59/20 – a virtual meeting has been arranged between the Arlesey Road Project Group and key officers of Central Beds Council to discuss a proposed MUGA facility for Arlesey Road.

Minute 61/20 – in response to the query about provision of lighting on the footpath from Pix Brook Academy leading to Common Road, Central Beds Council's Capital Construction Programme Manager (Helen Konstantinidi) advises that "Planning insisted that there be no lighting along the footpath as it would disturb wildlife. The addition of the path was a requirement of the Countryside Access and as such they wished it to be entirely rural in its specification". The Highways Clerk of Works for the school build (Gabriel Hopkins) advises that he won't be undertaking the Road Safety Audit on the junction and new road but will ensure that our comments are forwarded on for inclusion. Members repeated their concern for safety of children using the junction with Arlesey Road and the footpath to Common Road in the approaching darker months; the Clerk will contact the Head of Pix Brook Academy to establish their view on this matter.

Minute 43/20 – Cliff Andrews of BRCC has been advised of our suggested area at Arlesey Road for hedge and tree planting as part of the Etonbury Green Wheel project. In terms of planting, BRCC's ecologist and volunteer task leader (Richard Lawrence) will meet with Central Beds Council's Ecologist (Liz Anderson) who is also a Green Wheel group member, plus Councillor Collier as Chairman of the Etonbury Green Wheel to look at the area and agree a planting plan. BRCC will cover the costs for the plants/planting materials and staff time involved in leading volunteer tasks. They would seek to do the planting as joint Teasel/Ivel Valley Conservation Volunteer tasks. Funding for this comes from grants they have secured for the Etonbury Green Wheel and they would like the Town Council to consider other opportunities for environmental enhancements in the parish which might benefit the setting of the Green Wheel, as they may be able to fund those too. Consideration on this matter will be put to a future committee meeting.

66/20 ETONBURY GREEN WHEEL MINUTES

Members were previously provided with a copy of the Etonbury Green Wheel minutes of their meeting held on 31st July 2020. Councillor Mrs Clarey advised that information was provided last month about the Ramblers pop-up walks and that information is now out of date, but it is still worth looking at their walks throughout the year. She also referred members to Councillor Mrs Cooper's survey carried out during lockdown on the banks of the underpass in Hitchin Road.

67/20 EXECUTIVE ACTION TAKEN ON HEALTH AND SAFETY GROUNDS

Members considered the executive action taken by the Clerk, in consultation with the Council Chairman and Vice-Chairman, on health and safety grounds, to replace a broken plastic manhole cover and to replace with external heavy duty manhole cover and frame on Arlesey Road Playing Field. Cost £450 plus vat Dyno-Rod Plumbing.

RESOLVED that the executive action taken by the Clerk on health and safety grounds to replace a broken manhole cover with heavy duty manhole cover and frame on Arlesey Road, at a cost of £450 plus vat, is approved.

68/20 ALLOTMENT FEES

An allotment year runs from 29th September of one year to 28th September of the second year and fees are usually considered in July of each year in order to meet the requirement to give one year's notice of a change to plot fees.

Allotment fees for the current allotment year 29th September 2020 to 28th September 2021 are £52 full plot and £26 half plot. Consideration of allotment fees was not carried out at the usual time this year; therefore, members considered carrying over the 2020-2021 rates to the next allotment year starting 29th September 2021.

Allotment rates for Norton Road Allotments also apply to Common Road Allotments being managed by the Town Council on behalf of the Eleemosynary Charity of William Field.

RESOLVED that fees for the allotment year starting 29th September 2021 remain at the current allotment year ending 28th September 2020 - £52 full plot and £26 half plot.

69/20 NORTON ROAD ALLOTMENTS – HEDGE CUTTING

Members considered two quotes to cut the front of the boundary hedge of the Norton Road Allotments.

RESOLVED that the quote from Steve Dear Trees at £560 plus vat is approved - to cut back, front and top of hedge. To cut back inside of hedge on left hand side along grass area (where plots 25a, 25b and 25 are located). Remove all arisings from site. Funds from Allotments – Maintenance & Repairs budget, or EMR – Allotment Hedging should there be insufficient budget.

70/20 ALLOTMENT INSPECTION APP

The member of staff responsible for administering both allotment sites now has a work-provided mobile phone, and in order to reduce paperwork, to save a significant amount of time both on site and working from the office (or currently at home during pandemic period), a new app provided by Bbits and working with Rialtas Business Solutions (RBS) Allotment Management software (which we already have) enables staff to carry out inspections on site, to log findings, take photographs, generate letters and then import from the app to the software, with image data stored securely in the cloud.

RBS integration support and maintenance £75 per annum (3 year contract)
Bbits Mobile Inspections App Service £150 per year

RESOLVED that the Bbits allotments inspection app is taken up, with associated support service and RBS integration support and maintenance, as per quote.

The Eleemosynary Charity of William Field will consider making a contribution towards the costs, as the app can be used on both the Town Council and Charity allotment sites.

71/20 ALLOTMENT TRAINING

Members considered attendance at virtual training sessions on allotments being arranged by Hertfordshire Association of Local Councils, but open to all county association members in the Eastern region. Sessions are being delivered by the National Allotment Society and are for Parish, Town and Community Council officers, clerks and councillors.

1. Thursday 29th October, 2pm to 3.30pm, Tenancy Agreement and Policies
2. Tuesday 10th November, 10am to 12pm, Site Facilities and Health & Safety
3. Thursday 19th November, 2pm to 3.30pm, Self-Management by Associations

Course fee is £30 per course, or all three for £80

Any member wishing to attend is to advise the Clerk. The member of staff responsible for administering the allotments may also attend, and if she does, she is asked to feed back to the committee and Eleemosynary Charity of William Field.

72/20 PIX BROOK PLAY AREA

Members considered removal of balance beams in the ground at Pix Brook Play Area which are rotting. The Handyman Contractor recommends their removal, holes to be filled with soil and then turfed, for ease of grass cutting maintenance.

RESOLVED that the balance beams are removed, the holes filled and then turfed.

The Handyman has replaced the missing step on the mount that leads to the slide in the same play area, and whilst the rest are all in good condition at present, they may also rot over time. The wooden beams at the top of the slide have already been replaced with recycled plastic beams, as they were rotten. The steps could also be replaced with the recycled material, however this can be slippery when wet, and the Handyman recommends future consideration to removal of the steps and the mound grassed – children can still access the slide by climbing up the grass slope.

When the steps on the mound are at the stage of needing replacement, they are to be replaced with textured recycled plastic steps with grip, rather than leaving as a grass mound with no steps.

73/20 ARLESEY ROAD – PEDESTRIAN SAFETY BARRIERS

Members considered a quote for concrete barriers to be placed in front of the toilet unit in the Arlesey Road car park, to provide protection for pedestrians in that area. The toilet doors currently open out into the car park area, with no means to stop vehicles driving or parking right up against the unit. £1,220 plus vat (includes delivery and placing on site).

Members felt that these particular barriers were a little industrial looking, and requested a quote for the Jersey Concrete Barrier (triangular shape), and the 3m Concrete Barrier to consider at the next meeting.

74/20 ETONBURY GREEN WHEEL FUNDING

Members considered a request for funding towards Etonbury Green Wheel project for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023. Council has financially supported the Green Wheel project

in previous years, and other Green Wheel Council stakeholders have also contributed to the project. Caroline Romans, Project Officer for Leisure, Libraries and Countryside and also an Etonbury Green Wheel member, has requested a contribution from this Council of £1,500 for the 2021/2022 financial year and £1,500 for the 2022/2023 financial year.

RESOLVED that a contribution will be made of £1,500 to the Etonbury Green Wheel project for 2021/2022 and a further £1,500 for 2022/2023.

75/20 CHARGES FOR 2021/2022

Members considered charges to be levied for the year 2021/2022, having previously been provided with details of past year charges.

RESOLVED that charges for 2021/2022 will remain at current rates as follows:

Activity	2021/2022
Casual Football charge - Hitchin Road Recreation Ground Adult – charge per game Junior – charge per game per team	£45 £25
Stotfold Junior Football Club – (The Green, Hitchin Road Recreation Ground, Riverside Playing Field, Arlesey Road) charge for non-exclusive use by the club, per season	£5,000 per season
Dean’s Fair/other circus/fair visits Charge per non-opening day Charge per opening day	£30 £60
Arlesey Road playing field Casual Adult - charge per game Casual Junior – charge per game	£45 £25
Commercial use of The Green, Hitchin Road Recreation Ground, Arlesey Road, Riverside Playing Field and any other open space under responsibility of the Town Council for non-football use	£10 per session, per site used
Car boot sales/Annual Classic Car Show (The Green)	FOC

76/20 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chairman proposed that the press and public are temporarily excluded whilst matters pertaining to staff issues are discussed and that they be instructed to withdraw from the meeting for the following item. **RESOLVED** by members.

77/20 SALARIES 2021/2022 – MUGA CARETAKERS

Members considered the Confidential Report regarding staff salaries for the MUGA facility for 2021/2022.

RESOLVED that wages for the MUGA Caretakers are increased by 3% per hour for 2021/2022.

The press and public were readmitted after the conclusion of this item.

78/20 REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES AND EXPENDITURE PRIOR TO CONSIDERING ESTIMATES

Members considered a report from the Clerk on committee budgets in the current financial year:

22/203 Lighting – Electricity

Sum includes repayment of outstanding accounts from previous financial year

23/2003 Allotments – Income
Charity management fee still to be invoiced

23/2011 Allotments – Income Common Road
Income received under this budget line on behalf of the Eleemosynary Charity of William Field will be forwarded to them before the end of the financial year

27/205 Open Spaces – Legal & ROSPA
Expect legal fees in coming months, related to transfer of open spaces in Greenacre development

27/223 Open Spaces – Teasel/Centenary Wood
Have not yet received request for expenditure or ½ insurance contribution from Teasel

28/2006 Agency – Income agency grants
Annual sum received from Central Beds Council to contribute to verge cutting on their behalf. We have not yet received this year's sum – it is usually received towards the end of the financial year

33/232 Arlesey Road Playing Field – utilities
Electricity and water for the public toilets in the car park. Still chasing for reimbursement of utilities used by Borrás during build of Football Club facility

33/235 Arlesey Road Playing Field – pitch maintenance
Rik Golder (Landscape & Grass Cutting Contractor will carry out agreed maintenance on drained pitch area during autumn/winter – fertiliser, aeration, roll and harrow

79/20 COMMITTEE BUDGET SETTING 2021/2022

Members were previously provided with a copy of the figures for the first six months of the current financial year and undertook an appraisal before the estimates of the general running costs for the committee were considered:

Estimate figures for 2020/2021

Estimated running costs	£144,836
Less estimated income	£ 12,315
Total	£132,521

Earmarked Reserves

Rec Rolling Ground Improvements	£ 25,000
Rec MUGA	£ 15,000
Total	£ 40,000

RECOMMENDED that:

- i) The sum of £132,521 is submitted as this committee's budget request for 2021/2022
- ii) The sum of £40,000 is submitted as this committee's Earmarked Reserves request for 2021/2022
- iii) These amounts are to be submitted to the Establishment Committee for collation with other committee requests, in order to produce a draft council budget and precept request for approval by full council.

80/20 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES, RELEVANT TO THIS COMMITTEE ONLY

Consideration of re-opening of public toilets on the High Street and in the car park at Arlesey Road will be added to the next agenda.

Councillor Mrs Bundock is currently carrying out her annual roads and footways survey, this time particularly concentrating on footways. A copy of the survey so far has been delivered to the council offices.

The Definitive Maps Officer at Central Beds Council has corrected the webpage regarding the Old Brewery Close footpath, as it previously referred to another footpath in another town. We are now 10th in the queue! Thanks to Councillor Mrs Clarey for picking up on the error.

Councillor Hayes advised that he met with our Contractor Rik Golder at Arlesey Road regarding the pitch. He feels that the pitch has suffered, particularly with two exceptionally dry summers. From a safety point of view, the drain ruts need to be filled. It has also been noted that the pitches at Arlesey Road are not being rotated or moved, and the summer practice shows heavy wear. A discussion needs to be held with the Junior Football Club regarding ground management to avoid large costs to the council in ground repairs.

The public art for the Greenacre development is progressing well. Members were shown photographs of the granite pieces which are still in Portugal, and the finished mosaics.

An item will be added to a future agenda to consider an improved pedestrian access from the Riverside Car Park onto Kingfisher Way, particularly as a combination project to extend the car park. A meeting will be arranged with Chris Dorow, Public Rights of Way Officer, the Clerk and Councillor Mrs Hyde.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.30pm

MINUTES APPROVED (date):

SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN: