

MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE RECREATION GROUNDS, PUBLIC LANDS & LIGHTING COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10TH MARCH 2021, AT 7.15PM

Committee Members present:

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 and one member of the public

21/21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received.

22/21 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.

23/21 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES

None present.

24/21 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION

Correspondence

A report from Roger Watson of Teasel was previously circulated to members, and Roger was invited to outline the work carried out at Centenary Wood, as detailed in his report.

The Hawthorns along the edge of Centenary Wood were getting to a state where they were starting to die off, and last year, one by the entrance had died, and most were overgrown with ivy which was weighing the trees down and growing out into the roads to find space away from the woodland trees.

It is hoped that a number of the Hawthorn stumps will regenerate, but it may be necessary at some point to replant in the gaps.

This work ties in with the tree management policy being considered later in the agenda, in that trees do eventually come to a point where they have had their best and become a liability, so it is hoped that has now addressed that issue and will avoid the risk of trees falling into Malthouse Lane.

Members thanked Roger for his hard work, noting that this has greatly improved the area. A letter of thanks will be sent to Roger and Teasel for their efforts advising that we are very pleased with the results.

25/21 REPLACEMENT BENCH – ASTWICK ROAD

Following irreparable damage to a bench on Astwick Road, caused by a vehicle collision, members considered purchasing and installing a replacement bench. Quotes were previously provided to members.

RESOLVED that the Broxap Borth Seat, in green, at £282 (incl. fittings) plus VAT is purchased and installed as a replacement on Astwick Road.

26/21 PUBLIC CONVENIENCES ARLESEY ROAD – TIMED DOOR LOCKS

Members considered quotes (previously provided) to fit timed door locks to the public conveniences at Arlesey Road.

It was noted that the quotes included locks for all three doors, but one is a disabled toilet and should have a radar key and not be included with the timed locks so it is open 24 hours. A revised set of quotes will be sought for two timed locks and one radar lock for the disabled toilet

27/21 COUNTRYSIDE CODE – PROMOTION OF POSTERS

With the recent increase in outdoor exercise and walks in the countryside around the town, this has led to an increase in complaints about dog fouling and walkers straying off paths. To promote the Countryside Code which encourages walkers to respect the countryside, follow paths and pick up after their dogs, the Natural England Countryside Code poster has been posted on the council's Facebook page, website and displayed on our notice boards around the town. The Public Rights of Way (PROW) Officer supports this action, and that the poster is displayed along popular walks and rights of way. Laminated posters may not last, and the PROW Officer has suggested using snap frames and posts to mount them on.

The proposal is to display the posters using 'waterproof' snap frames (at around £5 each) and wooden posts, and to identify some trial locations.

It was suggested that recycled plastic posts are used rather than wooden posts for longevity. Checks would need to be made on land ownership and permission obtained where necessary to site the posts.

The Green Wheel group strongly advocate the countryside code – there may be some funding available from BRCC as part of The Green Wheel which could help fund the posts and frames, particularly where paths form part of the Green Wheel.

Articles will be included in the Stotfold News, website and Facebook to promote the countryside code, encourage people to pick up after their dogs, stick to paths and keep their dogs on leads, particularly where there are ground-nesting birds. The RSPB will be asked for advice on this, and if they have any materials we could use or display.

Members will forward a list of suggested paths, routes and points which would benefit from the Countryside Code poster.

RESOLVED that after identifying appropriate paths, routes and points which would benefit from the Countryside Code poster, obtaining permission where relevant, the required number of snap frames and recycled plastic posts will be purchased and installed. BRCC will be approached for possible funding to support this, or funds from the council's Open Spaces – Maintenance & Repairs budget.

28/21 TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Town Council is responsible for a large number of trees across its public open spaces and council owned or leased land. Ensuring that they are maintained to a healthy and safe standard is important. Members considered a draft Tree Management Policy previously circulated.

RESOLVED that the Tree Management Policy is adopted.

29/21 BUDGET & RESERVES REVIEW

Members considered the Budget & Reserves Review report as at month 11. There were no points of concern.

RESOLVED that any remaining funds in this committee's budget at the end of the financial year are vired as follows:

- Any funds remaining at year end in Street Lighting budget to be vired to Earmarked Reserves - Lighting
- Any funds other than Street Lighting budget remaining at year end, to be vired to the Rec Rolling Improvements Earmarked Reserves.

Members noted that forthcoming significant works requiring a build-up of funds include a refurbishment of the Riverside Playing Field MUGA, work to update existing play equipment – to include providing new items where identified, and an increase in public open spaces due to be transferred to the town council.

30/21 PUBLIC REALM WORKS

Members were reminded that if they have any matters that are to be reported to other parties or are repair/general maintenance work for the council, these should not be held until the next committee meeting, but should either be reported by the member to the office (in the case of town council related matters), or through the Fix My Street app/webpage which forwards reports of highway faults or street lighting faults to Central Beds Council.

Reporting repair/general maintenance to other parties

- Concerns expressed about groups of young people travelling around the footways in the town on scooters, often at speed (it is believed some of the scooters are powered). This is something to bring to the attention of the Police the Grand Union Housing Youth Participation Officer and the local schools.

Council action for repair/general maintenance

- The lights within Riverside Playing Field, leading from the car park to the MUGA are currently on 24/7, and there may be an issue with the timer – report to our Street Lighting Contractor, T Seymour.
- For the Council's Facebook page, highlight issues with people cycling on the footways either side of Hitchin Road where there are also pedestrians walking.
- For the Council's Facebook page – it has been noted that recent months have seen a large increase in number of empty hot drink cups which have been discarded on verges and in gardens – encourage people to take their rubbish home with them or place in a litter bin.
- There is a large amount of discarded cans, etc in the ditch at the corner of Riverside Playing Field by the Willow trees, and in the ditch beyond Riverside into the adjacent field of the Taylors Road development. Our Handyman is to remove what he can, and the Safer Communities Team at Central Beds Council and Youth

Participation Officer at Grand Union Housing are to be advised that this appears to be a 'hang-out' area, and to add to their walkabouts.

A query was raised as to why Rook Tree Lane was closed; the Clerk advised that it was an emergency closure to address a gas leak and may be in place until 17th March.

An item will be added to the next agenda to consider asking Highways to introduce shared cycle/pedestrian route to one of the footways on High Street, particularly as the Government is now focusing on getting more people on bicycles.

31/21 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES, RELEVANT TO THIS COMMITTEE ONLY

- The Chairman advised that last week, Highways surveyed Norton Road and High Street with a view to undertaking resurfacing work during the summer.
- The committee chairman and Councillor Cooper attended a site meeting with our Landscape Contractor, Rik Golder and Mr Barnes, Contract Manager for Taylor Wimpey to consider outstanding works at the Mill View development requiring completion before transfer of the public open space and play area to the Town Council. A report of the site meeting and works identified will be forwarded to the Clerk.
- Chris Dorow, Public Rights of Way Officer has visited the entrance at Riverside Playing Field and his contractors have cleared away overgrowth and laid some hardcore surface to enable easier access into the field. Our Handyman Contractor has put in a temporary pole to stop unauthorised vehicular access, as we were not aware that the work was taking place at this time. A permanent post will be installed in due course.
- As previously agreed, the May agenda will include an item to ask Central Beds Council's Ecologist to consider a tree planting scheme for the open space attached to the Taylor's Road development. To be included on the agenda in regard to the same development - the developers have grassed and planted about 30+ trees in the area around the play equipment. The grass is growing, but the recent rain has compacted the soil so a significant amount of bricks and rubble is now visible. The Clerk will ascertain whether the play area is to come under a management committee or if it is to be passed to the Town Council. There is still Heras fencing in the ditch and the plastic footings, which will be reported to the developers.
- Further items to be included on the May agenda: consideration of public art for the Taylors Road development, as it is understood that there is a Section 106 allocation for this - the Clerk will check the S106 Agreement, and also trigger points for public art; and an access point from the Riverside Playing Field into the Taylor's Road development open space, in order that our contractor's heavy maintenance vehicles can have access.
- The Clerk advised that we have been receiving a large number of complaints about parking on grass verges around the town, in particular Hitchin Road and Vaughan Road. We have carried out our usual letter drop to households and placing leaflets on windscreens, and the Clerk has also requested an update from our Ward Members regarding the previously mentioned Central Beds Council-wide measure to stop parking on pavements and verges. She is also investigating whether the

town council can introduce a bylaw – local councils do have powers to introduce certain bylaws, although it is not clear whether it covers parking on highways.

- The Clerk advised that a previously discussed issue and agreed measure, but which was not progressed, has been passed to office colleagues to take up as a project. They are currently working on a dog waste campaign and are putting together a project proposal for consideration by committee, which to date, includes erecting posters, providing dog waste bag dispensers – temporary or permanent and identifying problem locations. Members noted that two members of public have been given a stencil by Ward Member Councillor Dixon, and it was suggested that this person works with the council on identified hotspot areas, as part of this project.
- During lockdown, we have had an increase in reports from residents who have shown great community spirit and carrying out their own litter picks whilst on their walks around the town. Public thanks will be given on our Facebook page, website and individual emails. If everyone does a little bit as they are out and about it makes a huge difference throughout the year.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.25pm

MINUTES APPROVED (date):

SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN: