

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RECREATION GROUNDS, PUBLIC LANDS & LIGHTING COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12TH JANUARY 2022, AT 7.24PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GREENACRE CENTRE.

Committee Members present:

Mrs M Cooper (Chairman), S Buck, B Collier, A Cooper, S Hayes, Mrs J Hyde, J Talbot

Also present:

Councillor Mrs L Anderson, Town Clerk – Mrs K Elliott-Turner

1/22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Saunders.

2/22 DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS ON MATTERS CONTAINED IN THE AGENDA AND REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

There were no disclosures of members interests. There were no requests for dispensation. 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.

3/22 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES

Not at this point.

4/22 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION

Clerk's Report

The Clerk advised that she will be attending a zoom meeting on the 19th January - 'CBC Public Realm Bid Meeting', hosted by Biggleswade and Sandy Town Councils to discuss Public Realm deployment and funding opportunities. Both councils hope to place a bid for a section of the £400k capital funds as per Central Bedfordshire Council's Public Realm Position Statement & Operating Model. Its aim is to develop a town ranger/public realm partnership scheme with Town and Parish Councils.

Correspondence

Notification that the Local Transport Plan Rural Match Fund (RMF) application process is now open for inclusion in the 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 programme of works. This is a mechanism for Town and Parish Councils to request small-scale improvements to highways in their area - up to two scheme requests, with a requirement for a 50% contribution towards each scheme cost. Scheme information will be circulated, and considered at the next meeting.

Matters Arising

Minute 106/21 – in regard to the quote previously accepted for Steve Dear Trees to carry out 'red' and 'amber' works as identified on the tree inspection report, a request was made for the work to be amended with items dropped from the contract. The Clerk advised that the quote had been circulated, together with the tree inspection report, and a decision was made by the committee to accept that quote for works detailed. The council has therefore entered into a contract with

the company to carry out agreed works, and a date for work has been scheduled. Under Standing Orders, a change of decision would require either six months to pass before reconsidering the matter, or 5 members to sign a motion to bring the matter back to committee to reconsider based on new information. Members accepted the advice, and the work will continue as scheduled.

5/22 PLAY EQUIPMENT REPAIRS

Members considered quotes from two companies to carry out repairs, as identified in the latest ROSPA inspection reports. It was noted that one of the companies had quoted for play items which are no longer in situ and that some items they have quoted for are aesthetic matters rather than safety matters.

As one of the quotes came in very late, they are not comparable and do not address only the safety items highlighted in the ROSPA report, this matter will be deferred until the next meeting, with updated quotes being presented for consideration. This will also allow members time to review the previously issued ROSPA inspection reports for each site.

6/22 NORTON ROAD ALLOTMENTS – ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Members considered correspondence received and suggestions made by Central Bedfordshire Council's Safer Communities Team, following recent antisocial behaviour, alleged drug taking and vandalism at Norton Road Allotments.

Quotes will be obtained to provide a replacement entrance gate, at a height of 6ft to help deter unauthorised access over the gate.

7/22 NORTON ROAD ALLOTMENTS – FURTHER TREE WORK

Members considered a quote to fell shrubs against the front boundary hedge line and remove all arisings from site £75 plus vat.

RESOLVED that the quote from Steve Dear Trees to remove shrubs against the front hedge line and remove all arisings from site at £75 plus vat is accepted.

Members considered a further quote to 'cut back entire far end perimeter hedge, removal of brambles and extraneous plants. Cutting down removal of undergrowth, brambles and other overgrowth from turning circle. Cutting down and removal of overgrown nettles, brambles and other overgrowth from plot 39 perimeter around compost/manure pile, to edge hedge and back side hedge abutting the farm. Removal of all arisings.'

There were concerns about necessity to completely remove the far end hedge, and uncertainty about the exact areas referred to in the quote. A Member also advised that he had been contacted by the owner of the adjacent farm, who would like to meet to discuss work on the scrubland between his yard and the allotment site and has offered to clear the boundary hedge line between the two sites.

It was agreed that Councillor Cooper will meet the farm owner to understand the work proposed, and this will be assessed and discussed in conjunction with the quote currently presented – with exact areas of work to be clarified.

8/22 RIVERSIDE CAR PARK – SECURITY

Members discussed options for further security at Riverside Car Park. Quotes will be obtained to install a height barrier with signage to indicate that no overnight parking is permitted.

9/22 RIVERSIDE RECREATION GROUND – CLEARANCE WORK

Members considered updated quotes for clearance work at Riverside Recreation Ground, which were revised to ensure that they were comparable and met our previous quote specification, which included removal of a tree on the boundary with the former Roker Park site where the rear access gate are situated.

RESOLVED that the quote from W.R. Lewis & Sons at £1,845 plus, to include seeding work, is accepted.

Members commented that there is a drawing associated with the development by settle of the former Roker Park site, which clearly shows that the gates are to be retained to enable access by the Town Council.

10/22 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE ARLESEY ROAD RECREATION GROUND MUGA PROJECT

Unfortunately, due to one of the key personnel involved in this project at Central Bedfordshire Council recently leaving their post, little progress has been made on this project since the last update.

Current position: a planning application has been submitted for the MUGA, play equipment and outdoor gym, however planners now have queries about potential noise, detailed layout of the MUGA and the proposed landscaping mounds. This is being dealt with by a replacement person in Assets.

Tenders have been evaluated and successful companies chosen. They are aware that they were successful, however the contracts cannot be awarded until planning permission has been granted.

As a reminder, the tenders were split into five separate lots – MUGA, fitness equipment, play equipment, interactive ball wall and a Sona interactive arch. Central Bedfordshire Council's Play Officer advises that if all items are pursued, there will now be a shortfall of around £45,000. She is currently looking into whether there are any other funding pots she can use to meet this gap. If not, options to the council are to make up the shortfall, or to reduce the number of items included in the project. The outcome of the funding investigations will be reported to the next committee meeting, together with any action which may be required. A query was raised as to why this is now over budget, as those on the Task & Finish Group were advised that all items would be within budget. The Clerk will enquire.

A member requested that consideration be given to installing a new BMX track on the old skate park tarmac slab.

11/22 PROGRESS REPORT ON THE RIVERSIDE RECREATION GROUND MUGA REFURBISHMENT PROJECT

At the 24th November committee meeting, members agreed for the Clerk to proceed with pre-application advice for option 1 – ‘activity hub’ to determine feasibility, with the fees being around £2,000.

However, we have now received a quote from one of the representatives who gave the presentation at the November meeting, to seek pre-application advice at a cost of around £4,000. It is not clear whether this includes the Central Bedfordshire Council pre-application fee, as there is conflicting information on this.

The original intention of the committee was for the Clerk to submit a pre-application advice request, as it was hoped that the council would benefit from a 50% discount, as they do with planning applications.

Members were not happy to continue with such a large quote and preferred the council itself to proceed with the pre-application advice, rather than using an external architect’s services. Councillor Buck and the Clerk are to meet with the representatives of the LRHC who are proposing the ‘activity hub’, to advise this.

12/22 PUBLIC REALM WORKS

Members were reminded that matters for Central Beds Council can be reported via <https://www.fixmystreet.com/> and if they have any matters that are to be reported to other parties or are general repair or maintenance work for the council, these should not be held until the next committee meeting but should be reported to the office.

Council action for repair/general maintenance

- X3 wooden bollards at The Green (corner opposite former Roker Park site) are rotting at ground level and have become loose – Handyman to replace.
- Update required on the missing bench on Millennium Green – when will it be replaced?

13/22 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES, RELEVANT TO THIS COMMITTEE ONLY

It has been reported¹ that Central Bedfordshire Council has been shortlisted for the Environment Agency’s Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme, and if selected, part of the £6m fund would help vulnerable areas around Pix Brook, including Arlesey, Stotfold and Letchworth. The area around the Brook is one of 25 nationally to make the shortlist. Our Ward Member Councillor Dixon has advised that our length of the Brook is scheduled for work during 2023/24, with single span bridges being installed at Brook Street and Hitchin Road.

Councillor Mrs Anderson advised that she has attended a Central Bedfordshire Council zoom meeting on the topic of the Queen’s Green Canopy. In summary, Central Bedfordshire Council has funds available to supply trees; they recommend careful species choices, not necessarily native species; in terms of size, they recommend planting a ‘standard’ with a girth of 10 – 12cm, and to use tree guards. The next agenda will include consideration of locations for one or more trees to be planted under the Queen’s Green Canopy.

¹ BBC news <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-59952877>

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.45pm

MINUTES APPROVED (date):

SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN: