

MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE RECREATION GROUNDS, PUBLIC LANDS & LIGHTING COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9TH SEPTEMBER 2020, AT 7PM

Committee Members present:

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

Also present:

Town Clerk – Mrs K Elliott-Turner, Assistant Clerk – Ms C Jenkins, Councillor B Saunders

50/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs S Bundock, G Russell and J Talbot.

51/20 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.

52/20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES

None present.

53/20 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION

Clerk's Report

- A site visit is being made to our open spaces with trees, a report is being compiled following previous professional tree inspections and current condition, for a specification for works to be drawn up. Quotes for any required tree works will be presented to a future meeting. Previously approved work on trees at Hitchin Road Recreation Ground will be carried out at the end of September.
- An update has been received from the artist on the Greenacre Park Public Art project. The stonework is still in Portugal, and he hopes to have an update on delivery dates next week. They have completed the sundial months and compass granite is in progress. The x9 seating carved blocks are also being completed. The mosaics are now complete and ready in his studio, which will be fitted to the granite blocks prior to install on site, which they now see as end of September/early October.

Correspondence received

Nothing to report.

Matters arising

Nothing to report.

54/20 ETONBURY GREEN WHEEL UPDATE

Councillor Mrs Clarey advised that at their virtual meeting held on 31st July 2020, Cliff Andrews (BRCC) shared with Green Wheel stakeholders a report that had been sent to the Assistant Director of Environmental Services and Highways at Central Beds Council, which was for urgent attention. During lockdown, Cliff had spent many hours going through the Biggleswade, Etonbury and Sandy Green Wheel documents and updating them. Help is required from Central Beds Council to bring forward the work needed on the Green Wheels. Included in this are suggestions for filling in the missing links, exploring how routes can be upgraded, for example from walking to cycling routes, and the creation of new routes. Landowner discussions will also need to take place. The other notable item from the meeting was that the Bedfordshire Walking Festival, including the Three Wheel Challenge, has been cancelled. It is however possible, to join the Pop-Up Walks being organised around Central Bedfordshire during September. All walks have to be pre-booked and notification of this including the website is available the Town Council's website and Facebook page. There is a link through to the Bedfordshire area Ramblers. The nearest walks in this area are Sandy, Bedford, Willington, Moggerhanger, and also Luton, Dunstable and Leighton Linlade if you wish to go further. The next meeting of the group is on 6th November, at the Greenacre Centre or on Zoom. The minutes will be finalised once Cliff's document has been approved at Central Beds Council.

55/20 MEMORIAL BENCH

Members considered a request from a resident for a memorial bench and plaque to be sited in the green area of Trinity Road. Their parents had lived in the road for 75 years and they would like to place the bench as a tribute to them. The family are happy to pay for the bench and installation. Highways have given permission for a bench to be located, but it must be in a central location within the green, and utility plans must be obtained before commencing any excavation. The bench to be installed would have to be substantial and long-lasting - of the public realm type, and the council would purchase and install it, invoicing the resident for these costs. The bench would be added to our assets list and we would maintain it going forward.

RESOLVED that, subject to no issues with utilities in the area, we have no objections to the placing of a memorial bench on the green area of Trinity Road, and that we liaise with the family as to the positioning of the bench and funding.

Councillor Mrs Hyde joined the meeting during this item.

56/20 REMOVAL OF BUS SHELTER – THE GREEN

A large panel of the bus shelter on The Green, opposite The Crown public house, has recently blown out in high winds. This was reported by a resident, who also requests that consideration is given to removal of the shelter as they feel it is in a dangerous condition and is an eyesore. This bus stop is not an active stop and hasn't been for some years. They also advise that the post and sign 'bus stop' is leaning very badly. Members agreed that the shelter has deteriorated in condition over the years and it should be removed. Wooden bollards should be installed in its place to prevent the access of vehicles to The Green. Most of the bus shelters in the town are the maintenance responsibility of the Town Council – the bus shelter being discussed on The Green, High Street, Hitchin Road, but not the new electric sign bus shelter on Rook Tree Lane.

RESOLVED that the old bus shelter on the corner of The Green is removed, leaving the hard standing in place, and installing wooden bollards at the rear of the hard standing.

The leaning bus stop sign post is also to be removed. The officer at Central Beds Council responsible for bus shelters will be contacted for assistance in removal of this particular shelter.

57/20 SPEEDING CONCERNS – MILL LANE

A resident has expressed concerns about dangerous driving they have witnessed in Mill Lane, particularly around the entrance to the nature reserve. They have asked this committee to consider what we can do to make this area safe for pedestrians. The office has advised the resident that the Town Council has extended our street lights along Mill Lane to include the area of the nature reserve car park to aid visibility and safety of pedestrians in that area; we have suggested that they participate in SpeedWatch in that area and that they report incidences of apparent speeding to the Police; and have urged them to contact Central Beds Highways about their concerns and request improvements. Members discussed our policy for that area over many years in following the 'Quiet Lanes' initiative, which is to not encourage kerbs, lights, etc to keep as a country-type lane as far as is possible. Advice will be sought from Central Beds Highways as to how safety for pedestrians and drivers might be improved in this area.

58/20 ARLESEY ROAD RECREATION GROUND – ACCESS FROM REAR OF VAUGHAN ROAD

In the corner of the playing field, siding on to the rear of Vaughan Road and back gardens, the public have created an unauthorised access through from some garage blocks by the houses, running behind the gardens at the back of the new Pix Brook Academy and into the back corner of our leased open space. The wooden fence has been cut to create an unauthorised gap – we have repaired this numerous times. Members considered whether to install a kissing gate or similar which allows pedestrians but not motorbikes, etc, or to continue to close the unauthorised access point, more securely.

The Public Rights of Way Officer has been asked for his view, and notes 1) whose land is it on and do we have permission, 2) what are the implications should someone have an accident and wish to seek compensation, presumably the town council would be liable, 3) what do the owners of the garages think about formalising this route, they may object, 4) if the route was used informally for 20 plus years, then the route could formally become a right of way, is this what you would want.

It was believed that Central Beds Council had a blanket order on all of their land which stops routes becoming a formal right of way after the 20 plus year period, this will be checked.

Members noted that this is a route that people take to access the open space from the rear of the Vaughan Road garages, rather than walk the long way around, and that any measures we have taken so far to replace missing or damaged fencing have been undone within a short space of time. Discussions also took place on implications of installing a kissing gate or restrictive entrance posts, in that it would formalise it as an entrance point and there are likely to be DDA requirements in doing so.

RESOLVED that as a first course of action, we investigate the possibility of the housing association responsible for 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.

59/20 MULTI USE GAMES AREAS – RIVERSIDE PLAYING FIELD AND ARLESEY ROAD

Arlesey Road

The Clerk reminded members of this council's wish for specific items to provide a wider community use MUGA on this site and felt that one company's proposed MUGA facility with our required items met that wish. This project is to be funded by S106 funds available for this purpose, but it has been agreed that although the MUGA will be a Town Council owned facility, the project is to be led by Central Beds Council. Details on the Central Beds Council processes to enable this project to proceed were given to members, which included information on potential issues with equipment meeting the S106 descriptions, such as 'outdoor sport', and that the Play Officers advise that play equipment within a MUGA, in terms of a S106 funded facility, is not acceptable. The Central Beds Council Play Officer has provided suggestions of the type of MUGA facility they would be happy to see, which includes equipment from multiple alternative companies. A planning application was previously submitted by Central Beds Council for the MUGA but was withdrawn; it appears due to a misunderstanding about where the funding was coming from. The Clerk confirmed that S106 money is available, and this Council has agreed to meet shortfall for items not covered under the S106 descriptions, such as the build site compounds, footpaths leading to the facility, etc.

A copy of the Play Officer's report with suggested equipment for the facility, with redacted costings, is to be circulated to members for information.

A meeting will be held with the Play Officer, the Clerk, Councillors Cooper, Collier, Hayes and Saunders, and appropriate people from the Assets and Finance teams, to discuss project progress, proposals and funding, and the Play Officer's report with proposed equipment and MUGA.

Riverside Playing Field

An initial project plan has been started for a possible refurbishment of this MUGA using S106 funding from the Taylor's Road development, and looking into additional funding available. Discussions have been held with the Play Officer regarding proposed refurbishment of the hard court surface, which is in a very poor condition due to root damage from the Popular trees in adjacent Roker Park, which have now been cut down. The synthetic turf court is in good condition, having been refurbished in recent history, but requires an edge strip putting in to stop it curling up where the dividing fence was removed by vandals. The Play Officer has a preferred surfacing for the hard court, rather than tarmac – a black with green spots wet pour type surface. Each court is 17.5m x 35m, totalling 0.12 hectares (0.29 acres). At £25 per square metre, at the Play Officer's preferred surface material for the hard court only, it would be £15,000 out of the S106 budget available. Between the two courts, the fence needs replacing where it has been pulled down, and it is suggested that hard metal fence (Dux mesh or similar) is used, similar to that around the Arlesey Road Football Club pitch. The existing floodlight posts would remain in place but would not be used. The storage container currently on site is in very poor condition and now leaks, so would need replacement – this would not come from S106 funds. The Play Officer feels that this project would provide a useful amenity once refurbished, rather than remove it completely, which is likely to be costly. She has defined what wouldn't be possible from S106 funding, so the project would require some additional funding from the reserves of this committee.

With the adjacent development underway at Roker Park, providing a complete replacement MUGA with an all-weather, formal sports and fully lit facility would not be considered appropriate; the refurbishment of the existing facility provides an all-weather play area for children for informal use, such as riding bikes, remote control cars or a kick-about. Benches could also be installed.

The developers of the adjacent Roker Park site, Settle housing association, are not yet certain if the existing palisade fencing on the boundary between their site and the MUGA is to be retained. If it is to be removed, then we will need to factor in costs for a replacement boundary fence for the MUGA. In terms of access for refurbishment work by large vehicles or a crane to replace the container, the Roker Park plans for development were redesigned to enable occasional vehicle access, for maintenance only, from that development through the current double gates to Riverside Playing Field. This would be across two parking spaces, where a house had previously been planned. However, the new person at Settle responsible for the Roker Park development advises that she is unable to locate any legal agreement giving us right of access through the development to Riverside Playing Field. This is being checked and pursued. An alternative access to Riverside Playing Field, if not across the Central Beds Council owned section of the Playing Field which we lease, could be via land we are being offered from the Taylors Road development. We have already discussed needing tractor access between the two sites and over the culvert to enable ease of maintenance.

A project plan with a proposed budget will be put together to present to committee.

60/20 GENERAL WORK TO BE CARRIED OUT

There were no items requiring reporting by the office, that haven't already been reported, or items requiring work.

A query was raised about the inclusive roundabout at Hitchin Road Recreation Ground, and whether the suppliers had visited the site following our complaint that it wasn't working again. It appears that because it hadn't been used much, it had ceased up. The Assistant Clerk has visited the site with the suppliers and it was working correctly. For information, the suppliers had tried to say that there was only a one year warranty on it, however have now accepted that it is in fact a five year warranty, following its replacement and issues we had with its initial installation.

61/20 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES, RELEVANT TO THIS COMMITTEE ONLY

A member noted that now that the Pix Brook Academy is open there are safety concerns for children crossing the Academy service road the 'stone road'. In the mornings, Etonbury and Pix Brook Academies start at different times, and it is difficult for children to cross the junction on the cycle track/pedestrian way. At the end of the school day, it isn't such a problem, as Etonbury finishes quite a bit later than Pix Brook. At the other end of the 'stone road', a footpath has been created leading to Common Road, however it has no lighting and is not a safe route for children to use in the darker days. A query will be raised about whether lighting will be provided along this route as it makes sense to link development in the Astwick Road area to the 'stone road', particularly as children from that development are likely to attend either Pix Brook Academy or Etonbury and would use the footpath route. Gabriel Hopkins, Highways Clerk of Works for the Pix Brook junction and road works recently advised a member that he would be carrying out a safety audit on the road and junction with Arlesey Road and this seems the perfect opportunity to do it. Concerns have already been expressed by the Arlesey Road project group members about the safety of the interaction of a

footpath, a cycleway and the road turning in, and that there is no control of the road entry leading to Pix Brook Academy and there should be some way of stopping the traffic to let the children cross.

Councillor Mrs Clarey advised that she and the Clerk were liaising on the Old Brewery footpath matter and are hoping to get things moving again using a new contact at Central Beds Council.

Councillor Mrs Hyde gave an update on the proposed footpath leading from Chequers Close through the Churchyard. Ecclesiastical planning permission had been obtained for the path; however permission expires after 6 months, and therefore is about to run out. She will be chasing Nick Carafalo, Highways Area Steward, as they advised that they had wanted to do the work during the last financial year.

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

MINUTES APPROVED (date):

SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN: