

MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE RECREATION GROUNDS, PUBLIC LANDS & LIGHTING COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9TH DECEMBER 2020, AT 7.30PM

Committee Members present:

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

Also present:

Town Clerk – Mrs K Elliott-Turner, Councillor Mrs J Hyde

94/20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received. Councillors Mrs Bundock and Russell were absent without apologies.

95/20 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.

96/20 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – QUESTIONS, COMMENTS & RESPONSES

None present.

97/20 CLERK'S REPORT, CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED & MATTERS ARISING FOR INFORMATION

Clerk's Report

Teasel volunteers have built a new bench to replace the broken bench on Millennium Green and will also repair the bench in Centenary Wood. A photograph of the new Millennium Green bench is provided for members. Thanks have been sent, on behalf of the council, to Teasel volunteers for their work on the benches.

98/20 ALLOTMENT TRAINING REPORTS

Members noted reports from the Allotments Administrator following her attendance at two virtual training sessions. Suggestions from the training sessions were to display a specimen allotment tenancy agreement on our website, discussions around the process of ensuring cultivation is carried out and a set number of days in which to comply, re-naming the allotments guidance sheet to the allotments policy.

Members discussed the policy differences between the Town Council owned Norton Road Allotments and the Eleemosynary Charity of William Field owned and managed by the Town Council Common Road Allotments, as it was felt that these should be aligned.

Discussions also took place around whether beehives should be permitted on plots, particularly with concerns around lack of bees and attempts to encourage pollinators.

An item will be added to a future agenda to discuss keeping of livestock on allotment plots – both at Norton Road and Common Road Allotments, and to consider the policy documents for both sites to ensure that they are aligned. The final confirmed policy

documents will be added to our website.

Copies of her training reports will be provided to the Trustees of the Eleemosynary Charity of William Field.

99/20 ETONBURY GREEN WHEEL

Members noted the minutes of the Etonbury Green Wheel group meeting held on 6th November 2020, with an amendment that Councillor Collier was present.

With regard to minute 3.6, a new Green Wheel route has been found over land at Astwick, which involves re-routing a footpath.

With regard to bridleway 18 at the end of Common Road, the gate code appears to have been issued to multiple people, which has resulted in unauthorised access by construction lorries for a nearby development. The Rights of Way Officer has found a way of stopping unauthorised access, which may mean a change of code. Concerns were expressed that those who should have the gate code, may not have been advised.

100/20 REPAIR OR RE-SITE BENCH – HITCHIN ROAD

Following significant damage to the bench at the end of the footpath leading to the library and Simpson Centre from Hitchin Road, the concrete ends remain in place, and the wooden slats have been removed by the council's Handyman ready for repair/replacement. The resident in the neighbouring property and adjacent to the path has requested that it be relocated to the other side of the footpath, away from the boundary of their property. A copy of the request was provided for members.

Members discussed the reasons for the original installation of the bench, which was purchased with Carnival Committee money and installed some years ago. The bench was originally provided to assist those waiting for a bus on Hitchin Road, with good visibility up and down the road. It is also used by those using the Box of Cakes café, together with people waiting for others in the Library. Members noted that the concrete ends of the existing bench are difficult to remove and it would require a new bench to be purchased if it was to be re-sited. It was felt that if the bench were moved, or a new bench provided and sited on the opposite side of the footpath on the other grass verge, this would not remove the concerns of the resident. Members also felt that if the bench were re-sited further back along the path towards the Simpson Centre building, this is not overlooked and may attract unwanted gathering of people.

After due consideration, it was:

RESOLVED that the existing bench will be repaired, and not replaced or re-sited. Use of recycled plastic slats are preferred, but strong wooden slats if not possible.

102/20 HIGH STREET PUBLIC TOILETS

Following committee's decision to re-open the public toilets in the High Street, with twice daily cleaning and appropriate signage displayed, members considered a request from the Handyman for the toilets to be closed over the Christmas period, from Thursday 24th December to Sunday 3rd January inclusive.

During the pandemic period and whilst the toilets now being opened, members considered whether they wish the toilets to be locked up at the weekends as they are

not cleaned on Saturdays or Sundays (by contract), or whether signage to advise will be sufficient – although not as per agreed risk assessment.

Members noted the Handyman Contractor's charge to carry out the second clean per day, at £25 per day. He is contracted to clean the toilets Monday to Friday, once a day and has increased this to twice daily, as per risk assessment mitigation measures and decision of committee.

RESOLVED that the toilets will remain closed at the weekends. They will continue to be cleaned twice daily, Monday to Friday, and will be closed for the Christmas period from Thursday 24th December to Sunday 3rd January inclusive. Appropriate signage will be provided.

103/20 CHARGES FOR OPEN SPACE USE DURING LOCKDOWN

Members considered a request from Stotfold Junior Football Club for a reduction in charges to the club for the period of time when the Government has not permitted 'grass roots' football – training or matches, to be undertaken. Note for members, the Junior Football Club are now charged an annual fee of £5,000 for non-exclusive use of x4 specified open spaces during the football season as required.

RESOLVED that we will not consider any request for discounted lets of hire of public open spaces until the end of the football season, as the pandemic period still continues.

104/20 ARLESEY ROAD PEDESTRIAN SAFETY BARRIERS

Members considered quotes 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 – see October committee.

RESOLVED that the quote from Safe Site Facilities for x2 concrete barriers (3m each) for purchase and delivery to Arlesey Road £815.00 plus vat is accepted.

105/20 ARLESEY ROAD PLANTING SCHEME

Members considered a proposed planting scheme put forward by Richard Lawrence, Ecologist for BRCC. It is confirmed that funding will be available over two years, 2020/2021 and 2021/2022. Our Landscape & Grass Cutting Contractor has been asked for his comments on the proposals, from a maintenance point of view.

- Notes that the plan has approximately 375m of hedging in total across the site, and that future maintenance costs should be considered
- Suggests planting trees, even if fewer in number, along the Pix Brook Academy boundary, rather than hedging which has a much higher maintenance cost
- Happy with proposal to plant hedging on Vaughan Road boundary, behind the wooden fence, but suggests these are allowed to grow 'wild' rather than heavily maintained.
- Trees, or an evergreen such as Laurel could also be planting on the Vaughan Road boundary, including on the recreation land side of the wooden fence
- Happy to maintain wildflower planting on slope of Vaughan Road boundary bund

It was suggested that the Landscape & Grass Cutting Contractor discusses the proposed planting plan and his thoughts on the matter, with Richard Lawrence, and come back to committee. The committee prefers trees along the Pix Brook Academy

boundary, over hedges/shrubs, and shrubs outside the wooden on the Vaughan Road boundary left to grow as natural hedging, with trees in front of the fence, and wildflower planting on the bank.

A member referred to the section of fence behind the block building on the Pix Brook Academy site, which had to be removed in order to construct the building, and that although Wilmott Dixon have been asked to repair the fence, they still have not done so. The Clerk has been advised that this work will be done as the final job before leaving site, and will chase to ensure this is not forgotten. Reference was also made to a section of fence on the Pix Brook Academy access road in the training area, where it meets the fencing surrounding the stadium, and that this damaged fence has now increased in size creating easy unauthorised access not only for pedestrians but also for vehicles to the open space. The Clerk advised that the football club have asked for permission to erect fencing along this boundary, the rear boundary and a further fence to enclose their leased training area, and so this gap would be closed. Detailed specification is being awaited from the club in order to seek permission from Central Beds Council as head lease landlords. In the meantime, the Handyman will be asked to make urgent repairs to close the gap in the fence in this section to ensure no unauthorised vehicular access.

106/20 ARLESEY ROAD DRAINED PITCH

Members considered quotes to fill the sunken drain ruts in the drained pitch area at Arlesey Road.

RESOLVED that the quote from AA Sherriff & Son to top up existing sunken drains in the pitch area and to sow seed in March/April at a total of £6,673.60 plus vat. Funds from S106 funds relative to pitch provision/maintenance if appropriate, or committee budget for Open Spaces Maintenance & Repairs.

107/20 REVIEW OPEN SPACE MAINTENANCE

Further to the last meeting where options were discussed to encourage wildlife and pollinators to open spaces maintained by the Town Council, and in particular at the Arlesey Road recreation ground, our Landscape & Grass Cutting Contractor has been asked for his views on a reduced by workable mowing regime could be introduced at Arlesey Road, and he advises that he could sow a wildflower seed (or through BRCC's funding and project) in the swale at Arlesey Road and then cut this yearly. He has also confirmed that the bank on the Vaughan Road boundary could be left to grow with wildflowers (see previous item). Our contractor confirms that there will be no change in his charges for the grass cutting, as he would have to use a smaller machine, which will take longer to cut. Our contractor will be asked for his views on collecting grass cuttings.

RESOLVED that that a new mowing regime is introduced for parts of the Arlesey Road site. The grassed open space is to continue to be cut as per Grass Cutting Contract Schedule of Works, with the addition of planting of a wildflower seed in the swale area, with annual cuts to encourage wildlife and pollinators. As part of the BRCC planting project, a wildflower area will also be created on the bank to the rear of Vaughan Road, with an annual cut.

108/20 LAND SOUTH OF STOTFOLD – TRANSFER AND COMMUTED SUM

Members considered accepting transfer of open space and play area within the 'Land South of Stotfold' development to the Town Council and considered the proposed transfer plan and a report from the Clerk on commuted sum calculations and areas to

be adopted. The Clerk confirmed the situation with regard to the flood plain maintenance and ownership – the IDB have received commuted sums to maintain the flood plain, but the ownership would come to the Town Council.

Areas offered for adoption

Equipped play area

The play area consists of x14 pieces of fixed play items, set in grass or rubber matting. A tarmacked path leads through the play items, and a further tarmacked path separates the play area into two sections. Each area is surrounded by bow-top fencing, with pedestrian and maintenance gates. Both sections have metal benches and litter bins fixed to brick settings. A ROSPA inspection was carried out in March 2020, with identified required repair works being carried out during the summer. Works to the zip-wire remain outstanding. A final ROSPA inspection will be carried out prior to transfer.

Multi Use Games Area

A tarmacked surface MUGA, marked for multiple informal sports, sited adjacent to the equipped play area. Fenced with medium level mesh fencing, with two entrance gates and tarmacked paths leading to it. MUGA has x2 inset goal mouths and x2 basketball hoops provided. A ROSPA inspection was carried out in March 2020.

'Greenacre Park'

A grassed area of approximately 28,000m², consisting of general grassed open space, a pitch area, tarmacked paths, shrub planting, tree planting and x15 lighting. Edged on Marigold Way side by metal bow top fencing and hedging.

Informal open space

Approximately 30,000m² of informal open space. Includes tarmacked paths, x2 bridges across Pix Brook tributary, informal and formal shrub and tree planting, bulb planting, hedging, metal fencing, wooden benches and bollards. There are also a number of existing trees.

The IDB confirm that they have adopted the drainage element of Pix Brook and flood meadow, triggered when they accepted the as-built survey drawings. They advise that they would cut the grass once per year if needed, when carrying out annual channel maintenance. They advise that as the area of flood meadows is also public open space, it would likely be cut more frequently and to a higher standard.

Inspection walkabout

In October 2020, a walkabout was carried out by the Clerk, Councillors Alan Cooper and Brian Collier, and Adoptions Managers for Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon Homes, Dean Warmisham and Tom Freeman. All areas of the development being offered for transfer were inspected.

Works requiring completion, repair or replacement before adoption were identified and agreed.

Committed sum

Relevant sections of S106 Agreement are as follows:

Eastern Play Area Agreement – 15 year maintenance costs, which is to be calculated in accordance with costs set out in the Maintenance Schedule, such sum to be Index Linked.

Landscape Maintenance Commuted Sum – to be calculated in accordance with the costs set out in the Maintenance Schedule, such sum to be Index Linked.

Playing Fields Maintenance Contribution – 20 year maintenance cost for the Playing Fields, to be calculated in accordance with costs set out in the Maintenance Schedule, such sum to be Index Linked.

Relevant dates for Indexation:

Eastern Play Area	November 2004	RPI
Landscape Maintenance	November 2004	RPI
Playing Fields Maintenance	May 2005	RPI

The Clerk has used Central Beds Council's Play and Open Space Site Adoption Commuted Sum Calculation form, and the calculation formula contained within the S106 document to produce a starting figure. It should be noted that these calculations do not include the wooden bollards sited around the open spaces, the lighting columns in Greenacre Park, any lengths of metal bow-top, wooden post and rail or knee-high fencing (as we have not been provided with lengths of these), MUGA surfacing and fencing, or the maintenance of the pitch area. So these provisions would be extra to the calculation.

RECOMMENDED that the Town Council adopts the public open spaces and equipped play areas offered for transfer by Taylor Wimpey and Persimmon Homes.

With regard to commuted sums to accompany the transfer, it was:

FURTHER RECOMMENDED that the Clerk negotiates with the developers on obtaining the best achievable sum.

109/20 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION PURPOSES, RELEVANT TO THIS COMMITTEE ONLY

A member asked for an update on the Arlesey Road MUGA and play equipment project and the Clerk advised that she had notified the S106 officers of the creation of and members of the Task and Finish Group as agreed at a previous meeting, and she is aware that Naomi Henry, S106 Play Officer is currently working on a draft tender document but has not heard anything since. The Clerk and Councillor Saunders will chase for a progress update.

An update was requested for the connection of the lighting column at the end of Grange Drive, because the barriers are still in place causing an obstruction to mobility scooter buggies. This will be chased.

It was noted that the numbering of lighting columns in Mulberry Close on the Central Beds Council online reporting map does not correspond to the numbering on the columns. A request will be put to Highways to ask them to amend the map to correspond with the actual numbering of the lighting columns.

Councillor Mrs Hyde is meeting with Public Rights of Way Officer, Chris Dorow, tomorrow to discuss the pedestrian entrance into Riverside via Kingfisher Way, as per

previous meeting. She will report to the next meeting in January. The Handyman has some suggestions for moving a barrier and creating a hard-standing path by the existing kerb, and this will be discussed with Chris at the site meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed at 9.03pm

MINUTES APPROVED (date):

SIGNED BY CHAIRMAN: