

OPEN SESSION: There were 2 members of public present, who wished to speak.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RECREATION, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 4th May 2005 at 7.10 pm

PRESENT: Cllr N W Light (Chairman)
Cllr N J Chard
Cllr D Cole
Cllr D E Cracknell
Cllr Mrs B A Charlton
Cllr C Ford

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr N R G Clarke
Cllr M Daly
Terry Simpson, Town Clerk
Lyn Wickens, P A to the Town Clerk

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Malcolm Daly, newly elected member for the East Ward, to the meeting.

OS/4631 ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr M H Thierry and Cllr N Wood.

OS/4632 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

OS/4633 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 6th April 2005, having been circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record.

OS/4634 CARVERS – GRASS TENNIS COURTS

The Town Clerk reported to members that rabbits were a problem on the grass tennis courts and the groundstaff had been using a substantial amount of Kaloam on the grass as part of remedial works to keep the courts playable. This was adding to the cost of maintaining the courts. The Tennis Club would be reminded that it was their responsibility to get rid of the rabbits.

The Clerk also reminded members that the repayment of charges for maintenance of the tennis courts was subsidised by the Town Council, the Club paying 90% of the charge in 2005. However, he had been informed by the Tennis Club that their membership was falling and he was concerned that the cost of the maintenance of the grass courts was becoming too expensive for the Club.

Cllr Chard felt that the Tennis Club must pay their way. All other users of Carvers facilities pay the full maintenance costs. It would be regrettable if the grass court facilities were lost to

the town, but both Cllr Ford and Cllr Cracknell opined that the grass courts must be financially viable.

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk's report on the grass tennis courts be noted.

OS/4635

LAND AT LONG LANE

The Clerk advised the Committee that as part of the Council's overall strategy for sport at Long Lane, it was now necessary to assemble the land required. To this end, he and the Chairman of the Committee wished to commence talks with local landowners in the area to open negotiations.

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk and Chairman of Committee open negotiations with local landowners in order to assemble the land required as part of the Council's overall strategy for sport at Long Lane.

OS/4636

LAND AT CARVERS

The Clerk reported that a request had been received on behalf of the Governors of Ringwood School to transfer the piece of land between the tennis courts and Mount Pleasant Lane under some form of arrangement to the school's use.

Members considered the request but agreed that the land was an integral part of Carvers at present and it would not be appropriate to allow it to be used by the School.

RESOLVED: that the request from the Governors of Ringwood School to transfer the piece of land between the tennis courts and Mount Pleasant Lane be not approved.

OS/4637

LAND AT THE BICKERLEY/POCKET PARK

The Clerk reminded members that it had been their intention to enhance the land being acquired at The Bickerley and also improve the ambience of the Pocket Park.

He had spoken to a Landscape Architect, Mr Tony Harris, who was Open Space Co-Ordinator at the District Council, about the Council's plans.

Mr Harris had prepared an initial sketch plan of proposals for the site, which were circulated to members. The Clerk was pleased to report that the District Council had agreed that this work, together with preparation of a detailed annotated plan of the agreed layout for the site, could be carried out free of charge. The Clerk also advised that he would seek grants for the work involved.

RESOLVED:

(i) that the Town Council accepts the offer from the District Council to provide preparatory drawings for the enhancement of the land to be acquired at the Bickerley and the Pocket Park,

(ii) that the Open Space Co-Ordinator be thanked for the excellent initial sketch plans which will be appropriate to form the basis of the development of the site and

(iii) that the Council seeks grants to carry out the work.

OS/4638

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED: that under section 100 (A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information. (Annex 'A').

OS/4639

PROPOSED RUGBY FACILITIES AT RINGWOOD JUNIOR SCHOOL

The Chairman referred members to the notes of the special meeting recently held with representatives of Ellingham and Ringwood Rugby Club, Ringwood Junior School, New Forest District Council and the Town Council on the proposed rugby facilities at Ringwood Junior School. He said that members must now decide firmly on the way forward for the Town Council.

Cllr Light asked members to first consider the suggestion put forward by the Mayor, that the Town Council take on the lease of the community facilities with a sub-lease back to, or contract with, the Rugby Club to undertake day to day management but with provision for the Town Council to use the facilities free of charge for certain events during the year.

On consideration of the suggestion, members were opposed to this proposal on the basis that it could lead to the Town Council having to accept responsibility for some revenue costs.

Members noted that planning officers had indicated that it was likely that the District council would permit only two late nights per month and there was also no indication at present as to whether or not Entertainment and Liquor Licences would be granted.

Members were concerned that these constraints could make the community hall unviable as a business venture.

Cllr Chard said he was extremely concerned that local residents had not been consulted about the proposed scheme and felt that this was now a priority. The Town Clerk explained that the Town Council had objected to local consultation until a firm decision had been made by all the partners in the scheme that the project would go ahead.

Cllr Ford endorsed Cllr Chard's view that local residents must be informed of the nature of the proposals.

Concern was expressed by members that use of the community hall by the school was to be until 6.00 pm each weekday evening, which it was felt was excessive, as it would not allow enough time for evening hirers to set up the hall for their use and would have an adverse effect on the commercial viability of the scheme.

Several members expressed concern over traffic issues due to the location of the site and felt this could well be an issue for the Highways Authority when the planning application was submitted.

Members then considered the option of supporting the provision of a smaller facility on the site with 4 changing rooms and a bar/clubhouse only and Cllr Light produced plans of Rollalong portable buildings for members to view.

Members noted that the Town Council had not changed its brief for facilities in the development since the first meeting two years earlier. It had always required a community facility that included provision to accommodate at least 150 persons seated at tables for a

dinner/dance and a separate dance floor. Other requirements in the specification had also not changed. However, the estimated cost of the project had risen from £350,000 to over £600,000 and, despite repeated requests to the Rugby Club, an updated business plan and recalculated capital and revenue estimates had not been provided.

In conclusion, Members felt that the location of the site was not perhaps the right place for a community hall and would like to see reduced costings for a smaller facility. They supported the provision of rugby facilities at the site and noted that the Rugby Club had indicated that next season it would have reached its maximum size and the facilities at Parsonage Barn Lane would be sufficient for its long term future.

RECOMMENDATION

It was recommended to Council, that

(i) the Town Council supports the development of rugby facilities on the Parsonage Barn Lane site, but in view of changing circumstances, particularly in relation to developments at Long Lane and increase in cost, the Rugby Club be requested to now also provide costings for the provision of changing facilities and a smaller bar area at the site,

(ii) in the event of the development proceeding, the Rugby Club to be advised that in view of their assurances about the suitability of the Parsonage Barn Lane site, no provision would be made for rugby facilities in the scheme at Long Lane and the Council would develop that site for other sports.

(iii) the Club be advised that, as a condition of the partnership approval to this scheme, any new community facilities must be made available for an agreed number of public authority events each year and such events shall have priority over all other uses or bookings and be free of charge, apart from a charge for heating and lighting.

(iv) in order to increase the amount of time the community facilities are available, negotiations be undertaken by the Rugby club with Ringwood Junior School to reduce the school's hours of priority use.

(v) the Rugby Club now proceed with consultation with the local community on the project,

(vi) the Rugby Club to be reminded once again that the Town Council wished to see their business plan and fully worked up capital and revenue estimates.

OS/4640

URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.45pm.