

**OPEN SESSION:** There were several members of the public present, one of whom wished to speak.

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RECREATION, LEISURE & OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE**

Held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2006 at 7.10 pm

**PRESENT:** Cllr M F Daly (Chairman)  
Cllr N J Chard  
Cllr B A Charlton  
Cllr D Cole  
Cllr D E Cracknell  
Cllr L C Ford  
Cllr Mrs V A Sullivan

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr T R Simpson, Town Clerk  
Mrs Jo Stannard, Deputy Town Clerk

### **OS/4781 ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr N W Light.

### **OS/4782 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

### **OS/4783 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2006, having been circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record.

### **OS/4784 RINGWOOD LAWN TENNIS CLUB**

The Town Clerk reported that, when the invoice for the 2005/06 season was issued to the Tennis Club, he had invited representatives in to discuss this with him and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, as it had been for a larger amount than anticipated. He had expected the Club to request that payment be spread over the current financial year, however, such a request had not been received. It was noted that the cost to each adult member of the Club for use of the grass courts during the summer and the hard courts year-round was £1.88 per week. Indeed, the Council had been subsidising the Club to the tune of £1,000 per annum for the last 20 years, unlike any other sports club in the town. This effectively meant that each adult member of the club was receiving a subsidy of £30 to £40 per annum. A copy of a schedule of costs and subsidy was circulated to members and is attached as Annex 'A'. A comparison was made with hire costs for other hard tennis courts in the area, which were hired out at an average of £5 per hour. The Council had made every effort to try to keep the costs to maintain the grass courts as low as possible and, at the request of the Club, had reduced the maintenance regime in 2004/05. However, this had resulted in the courts being of an unacceptable standard and the maintenance was subsequently reinstated. The Town Clerk said that there was a need for the Town Council to provide tennis facilities in the town. However, if the grass courts were to be retained, it would be necessary to set realistic and pre-agreed charges. In addition, it was noted that the Club was using this year's subscriptions

to pay last year's invoice. The Club had had difficulty in paying maintenance for many years and the Town Clerk had written to the Club about this a year ago asking for it to increase its membership and turn its finances around so that the re-charging arrangements could be achieved on a more timely basis.

Cllr Mrs Sullivan said that it would be useful to see comparative costs for the Council's other facilities that were hired out to sports clubs. The Town Clerk replied that this was one area that would be looked at by the Finance Manager to improve the financial information available to Members.

Cllr Mrs Charlton said it appeared that the Council was trying to run a facility that neither it nor the Tennis Club could afford. She said that it would seem sensible to have more hard courts that didn't require the high maintenance of grass courts. The Town Clerk replied that this had been put to the Club, together with the suggestion that the existing hard courts be upgraded and a new surface put down. The Club had also been asked if it wished to move to Long Lane, but no definitive response to either suggestion had been received from the Club.

Cllr Cracknell said that he was pleased to see the Club had now started to involve children. He proposed that the Club be given one month to pay the remainder of its invoice for 2005/06.

Cllr Chard said that all clubs must be treated equally. The Council had previously come to an arrangement with the Club that it would increase its percentage contribution over the years, so that it was now required to pay one hundred per cent of the running costs. Although the Council had been sympathetic to the Club previously, it was not a charity and needed to recover its costs. He suggested that further discussions took place with the Club to discuss future arrangements.

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Clerk, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee meet with representatives of the Ringwood Lawn Tennis Club to discuss arrangements for the payment of last year's and this year's accounts and for the use of tennis facilities at Carvers in future years, and report back to the September meeting of this Committee with firm proposals.

#### **OS/4785**

#### **WALL BETWEEN CEMETERY AND RINGWOOD JUNIOR SCHOOL**

The Town Clerk reported that the wall between the Cemetery and Ringwood Junior School, which was the responsibility of the Council, was in danger of collapse and in need of repair. A quotation of £2,100 had been received for this work.

#### **RECOMMENDED TO POLICY & FINANCE:**

That a supplementary budget of £2,100 be approved for the repair of the wall between the Cemetery and Ringwood Junior School.

#### **OS/4786**

#### **REPLACEMENT TRACTOR**

The Town Clerk reported that he had received indicative prices for three tractors, which had now all been tested by the groundstaff. As a result of this testing, it appeared that one tractor would not be suitable for the Council's needs. He therefore recommended to Members that tenders be invited from the two companies that were able to supply the tractors which were best suited to the Council's requirements. It was noted that maintenance regime had been taken into consideration during testing by the groundstaff and that full details would be requested to be supplied with tenders.

**RESOLVED:** That tenders be invited from the two companies able to supply the tractors best suited to the Council's requirements.

**OS/4787**

**BICKERLEY / POCKET PARK**

The Town Clerk reported that he had met with representatives of Hampshire County Council regarding the extension of the footpath across the Village Green. It was noted that the District Council had no evidence of the receipt of £10,000 developers' contributions, which was taken specifically for the extension of the footpath. If this could not be found, the County Council would only have sufficient funds to kerb the length of the footpath with heavy duty rough stone. The Town Clerk said that it was important to note the Village Green extended right to the hard edge of the tarmac road and, as a result of kerbs being put in place, this would effectively reduce the width of the road by up to 3ft in places.

Members also discussed the issue of parking by residents of Bickerley Terrace, who had been given permission by the Council many years ago to park outside their houses. It was noted that the Council's solicitors were still looking into whether or not this area was Village Green. If it did prove to be Village Green, the Council would have to take further action as it was not legally permissible to park on land with Village Green status.

**RESOLVED:** That the proposal for kerbing at the Bickerley be approved and the effect of it on the width of Bickerley Road also be referred to the Planning, Town & Environment Committee.

**OS/4788**

**PLAY AREA SAFETY INSPECTIONS**

Members received the Deputy Town Clerk's report on the Annual Play Area Safety Inspections (*Annex 'B'*). All items of equipment had been given a risk rating and it was noted that only three items had been given a moderate or high risk rating, and action was being taken to remedy this. This year, the inspector had recommended that the Council should give consideration to replacing the mound slide at Carvers. This was the only piece of equipment that had not been replaced during the refurbishment of the site in 2001 and no longer met European Safety Standards for new pieces of equipment. Cllr Cracknell said that it was also a cause for concern as there had been reports of undesirable behaviour taking place in the privacy that the mound provided. It was noted that funds were available in the Council's Provisions for playground equipment.

The Town Clerk reported that the groundstaff had removed or lowered shrubs and hedges in areas where children played in order to minimise hiding places. It was noted that some neighbours were not happy with this arrangement. However, Members agreed with this course of action.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) That actions proposed in Appendix 'A' to the Deputy Town Clerk's report be approved.
- 2) That the Deputy Town Clerk be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee, to take necessary action to eliminate risk identified as moderate or high in the inspector's report.
- 3) That the Deputy Town Clerk look into options for replacement of the mound slide in Carvers playground.

**OS/4789**

**COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS PLAN FOR THE NEW FOREST AND SOUTH WEST HAMPSHIRE**

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the Council had been consulted on this draft document and recommended that a response be made in support of it. Two of the proposed actions were of particular interest to the Council 1) that information about existing open spaces be coordinated and their use be promoted within the local area and 2) that gaps in the rights of way network be identified, prioritised and solutions proposed. It was noted that the Castleman Trail was a good example, where there was a need to establish a safe link between the section end at Bickerley and the new section at Crow. Comments had also been received from the Chairman of the Ringwood and Fordingbridge Footpath Society, who was concerned there was no mention in the document of how the rights of way network was going to be improved, particularly as the current resource was wholly inadequate to maintain the existing network at even a reasonable standard.

Cllr Cole said that the section of Castleman Trail from Ringwood to Dorset was not being maintained to an acceptable standard and was very overgrown. The Town Clerk reported that he had previously contacted the County Council and offered to act as its agent to maintain this path, but had received no response.

**RESOLVED:** That the Council respond in support of the Draft Countryside Access Plan for the New Forest and South West Hampshire and that the response refer to those comments made above.

**OS/4790  
URGENT BUSINESS**

It was noted that a member of the public had offered to contribute towards the cost of installing seats on the Bickerley. It had been suggested that such offers be delegated to the Town Clerk to deal with, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee. However, Members felt it was important that the whole Committee should be involved in decisions such as location and design.

**RESOLVED:** That the offer of a contribution towards the cost of installing seats on the Bickerley be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

**OS/4791  
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 item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. (*Annex 'C'*).

**OS/4792  
RECREATION STRATEGY**

The Town Clerk reported on a meeting with officers of the District Council regarding the implementation of the Council's Recreation Strategy.

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Clerk's report be noted.

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