

OPEN SESSION: There were several members of the public present who gave notice they wished to speak on specific agenda items to be considered by the Committee.

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

Held on Wednesday 12th September 2007 at 7.00pm

Apologies

Prior to the meeting, the Town Clerk reported that apologies for absence had been received from Cllr Cole and Cllr Cracknell.

Declarations of Interest

Cllr Wiseman declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 10. She indicated that she would leave the room during discussion and voting on this item.

PRESENT: Cllr M F Daly
Cllr N J Chard
Cllr L C Ford
Cllr B H Terry
Cllr M J Urwin
Cllr A C Wiseman

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

OS/4930 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th July 2007, having been circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record.

It was agreed to take item 2 and 5 next as PC Norman Lampard and PCSO Tracey Cooper were in attendance.

OS/4931 CARVERS RECREATION GROUND

The Town Clerk reported that the Police had organised Street Meets at both Carvers Recreation Ground and Pocket Park to address issues of antisocial behaviour with all interested parties. He said that the response to both Street Meets had been totally different; the young people at Carvers had not been willing to listen, but the group at Pocket Park, who had disassociated themselves from the group at Carvers, were much more responsive. It was noted that the small group meeting at Pocket Park were aged between 16 and 20 years old and there had never been any evidence of drug or alcohol abuse. However, it was a more diverse group at Carvers, aged between 13 and 18, and there had been as many as 50 gathered here on a Friday night.

He added that members of the public at both meetings had difficulty in understanding the roles of the local authorities and the Police. He had emphasised the fact that, although the Town Council worked closely with the local Police to try and minimise offences, it was the Police's responsibility to enforce the law.

Residents of Collins Lane, whose properties backed on to Carvers Recreation Ground, spoke about the fact that the antisocial behaviour was the worst it had ever been. They said that large groups congregated at the seat near their properties, which acted as a magnet. They reported that young people had been climbing on their sheds, using their gateways and hedges as a toilet, using the litter bin adjacent to the seat

as a target, and were continuously using foul language. One resident with young children had to clear up broken glass and cans on a Saturday and Sunday morning before letting her children out to play and had to stay inside after 7pm so that the children were not exposed to the bad language and behaviour. Residents therefore asked if the seat and litter bin could be moved to an alternative location away from residential properties.

As it appeared that this behaviour was fuelled by alcohol, the Town Clerk had asked the Police to supply information on the possible implementation of an alcohol free zone, which would enable Police officers to confiscate alcohol. PC Lamped felt that this would have a significant impact on the problems at Carvers and in other areas of the town.

Residents also reported continuing problems with young people driving mopeds across Carvers. It was noted that the Police could take action against persistent offenders if registration numbers were reported.

Cllr Chard proposed the complete removal of the seat from Carvers, at least on a temporary basis. However, the Town Clerk advised against removing the seat altogether, as this would mean that the young people had won and would also remove another public facility. He suggested that if Members wished to move the seat from its present location, it could be moved elsewhere in Carvers.

RESOLVED: That the seat and litter bin at the rear of properties in Collins Lane be moved to an alternative location at Carvers Recreation Ground.

OS/4932 POCKET PARK

The Town Clerk reported that the young people who had attended the Street Meet at Pocket Park had agreed to help move the picnic bench and had also welcomed the idea of introducing street lighting to the area.

It was noted that there had been several complaints from residents about behaviour in Pocket Park. However, since the Street Meet there had only been a limited number of calls to the Police. One resident had complained that there were people playing in the river. Members were pleased that the Park was being used in this way as this was one of the reasons for carrying out enhancement works and opening up access to the river.

Members considered a request from residents to move the picnic bench further away from residential properties.

RESOLVED: That the picnic bench in Pocket Park be moved underneath the trees, and that the offer of help from the young people be accepted.

OS/4933 TENNIS FACILITIES

The Town Clerk reported that there had been a total of 19 bookings for the grass tennis courts throughout the summer and, contrary to claims made by the Club, there wasn't currently a large demand for grass courts in the town. It would cost the Council in the region of £5,000 on maintenance to bring the courts back up to standard for use next season. He suggested that the Council would get better value by removing the fence between the grass courts and the children's play area, giving a safe area for children to play, which would also offer an opportunity to regrade the area around the mound slide.

Cllr Mrs Wiseman was concerned that the courts had not been well used as they were not easily accessible as hirers had to pay and obtain a key from the Recreation Centre. She felt that this issue should be addressed before making a decision on the future of the grass courts. She also asked how well used the hard courts were by the general public. The Town Clerk reported that the hard courts had not been well

used when the tennis club was in operation. He suggested that the Council could consider investing in a good quality surface for the existing hard courts, particularly as the tennis professionals he had spoken to said that this was a better surface, especially for children learning to play.

Members noted that the Ringwood Lawn Tennis Club had two outstanding invoices, totalling £886.53 + VAT. However, the former Chairman of the Club had said that the Club had no funds and former members of the Club had not offered to pay any of the outstanding monies. It was therefore recommended that the Policy & Finance Committee be asked to write off this debt.

The Town Clerk reported that works to the tennis pavilion, which the Tennis Club should have maintained, would cost in the region of £5,000 to bring it back into a usable space for the drop-in centre. This included works to the roof, electrics, new doors and internal redecoration, as well as creating a separate access from Carvers field. However, it was hoped that some of these costs would be recovered from the insurance company (for the roof) and grants from the County and District Councils and Carnival.

Jenny and Phil Critchlow were in attendance. They had run Belinda's drop-in for over ten years very successfully and had agreed to run a drop-in at the tennis pavilion every Friday night. It was noted that Jenny worked as a full-time area youth worker. She said that the key to working with young people was to get them to reflect on how their actions impact on other people. However, this could only be achieved with regular contact to build relationships. She said that they got a brilliant response from young people when they ran Belinda's and in the ten years had only had difficulties with two young people. She said that the location at Carvers was perfect and the young people were excited about the drop-in starting again.

Jenny referred to Gareth Vaughan who had died of leukaemia in July. He had attended the drop-in every week without fail, even when he was very ill and had been a very positive influence on young people, so much so that they had asked if the drop-in could be called "Vaughan's". Members agreed that they would give this consideration.

Cllr Mrs Ford left at 7.55pm.

Cllr Terry said that he had every confidence in what Jenny and Phil would be doing. However, he asked that they liaise with the Police to try to avoid disturbances when the centre closes.

Mr Eric Champion of Collins Lane offered to install security shutters at cost if there was an ongoing problem with vandalism.

RECOMMENDED TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE:

- 1) That the two debts owned by Ringwood Lawn Tennis Club be written off; and
- 2) That direct costs and loss of income estimated to be about £6,410 for 2007/08 be met from the General Reserve.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the grass tennis courts be closed and the fence be removed to incorporate the children's play area;
- 2) That the opportunity be taken to regrade the area around the mound slide and to install additional seating in the play area;
- 3) That use of the hard courts be monitored and consideration be given to improving the surfacing on the hard tennis courts, as part of the Committee's 2008/09 budget proposals;
- 4) That action taken by the Town Clerk to bring the tennis pavilion back into use as a drop-in centre be approved; and
- 5) That consideration be given to naming the drop-in centre Vaughan's.

OS/4934

WINTER PLANTING

The Town Clerk reported that a quotation for winter planting had been received from Pam's Plants for approximately £1250, which was within budget. He added that, in an effort to reduce ongoing revenue costs, he would be looking at the possibility of arranging for a local garden centre to plant the town roundabout with shrubs to give all-year colour.

RESOLVED: That the quotation for winter planting from Pam's Plants be accepted.

**OS/4935
RINGWOOD CEMETERY**

The Town Clerk reported that the house next to the access to Hightown Road allotments had a septic tank located underneath the allotment plots, which would have to be removed when the ground was returned to cemetery land. It was possible that this property could be connected to the septic tank in the cemetery or to a private drain serving the adjacent housing association properties. Investigations were ongoing.

The Town Clerk was also looking into options to replace the unsightly ashes burial area in the Cemetery and to make better use of the area available. He reported that he had written to the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management to ask if it would be practical to either scatter ashes and display plaques on a wall, which would be removed after a number of years; erect a wall with cavities for ashes to be inserted for a fixed period and then be scattered, or to permanently place ashes in a memorial wall. Cllr Terry suggested that rose beds could be used for scattering ashes, with plaques inserted in the ground.

RESOLVED: That the information be noted.

**OS/4936
GAS WORKS IN THE HIGH STREET**

Members noted that the proposed gas works in the High Street had been put back to January 2008. As part of those works, Southern Gas was looking to locate a fenced storage compound on part of the Bickerley and, following consultation with Members, the Town Clerk had agreed to the use of that part of the Bickerley recently purchased from Ted Hiscock, that had not yet been developed, provided that the ground was fully reinstated on completion.

RESOLVED: That Southern Gas be authorised to use an area of the Bickerley for a temporary storage compound during the gas works in the High Street scheduled for January 2008.

**OS/4937
EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED: That in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it was advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they were instructed to withdraw (*Annex 'A'*).

**OS/4938
RUGBY FACILITIES AT RINGWOOD JUNIOR SCHOOL**

The Town Clerk reported that, in line with previous decisions made by the Council, he had informed the District Council that, as the Town Council considered the scheme to be still at risk, no monies should be released from developers' contributions for rugby facilities at Ringwood Junior School at this stage.

RESOLVED: That the action taken by the Town Clerk be approved.

Cllr Wiseman, having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following item, left the room and took no part in the discussion and voting.

OS/4939
LAND AT LONG LANE

Members discussed arrangements for renting land at Long Lane for additional pitches.

RESOLVED: That the revised terms be agreed.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.25 pm.