

OPEN SESSION: There was one member of the public present, who wished to speak.

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

Held on Wednesday 13th June 2007 at 7.03 pm

Apologies

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Town Clerk reported that an apology for absence had been received from Cllr B H Terry.

Declarations of Interest

Cllr Wiseman declared a personal, but non-prejudicial interest in agenda items 4 and 10, as she is a resident of Long Lane.

PRESENT: Cllr M F Daly
Cllr N J Chard
Cllr D Cole
Cllr D E Cracknell
Cllr L C Ford
Cllr M J Urwin
Cllr A C Wiseman

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr T R Simpson, Town Clerk
Mrs L A Wickens, P A to the Town Clerk
Mr C Wentworth, Grounds Foreman

OS/4910

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd May 2007, having been circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record.

For the benefit of the member of the public present, the Chairman agreed to take Tennis Facilities as the first agenda item.

OS/4911

TENNIS FACILITIES

Prior to the meeting, a letter from Roger Titley, the former Chairman of the Tennis Club, was circulated to members. With regard to the comment made in the Public Participation Period, the Town Clerk advised Members that once he had been notified that the Tennis Club ceased to exist, he believed its former members could not continue to benefit from the free use of the courts previously afforded to the Club. It would have been wholly inappropriate to allow former members of a club that was still in debt to the Council to have free use of courts for which other members of the public would have to pay. Members of the Committee concurred with the action taken.

The Town Clerk advised that the Chairman of the Ringwood Lawn Tennis Club had continually told the Council that the maintenance charges for the grass courts which the Club was being asked to meet were too high and due to a now very low membership, the Club was unable to pay. The Clerk said he had now been told by other members of the Club that the main reason for the loss of members was due to harassment of players during games by youths using the skatepark and congregating on Carvers in the area of the grass courts.

He had advised the former Chairman of the Club that he believed that if the Club had come to the Council and said that lawn tennis was not compatible with the other activities available on that part of Carvers the

Council would have addressed the problem in a different manner. However, originally this aspect was not given any particular emphasis by the Club; the high cost of maintenance was always given as the main reason for loss of membership.

Policy & Finance Committee had asked the Recreation Committee to re-consider taking down the tennis pavilion. A meeting had taken place between the Town Clerk, Chairman of the Recreation Committee, a representative from Ringwood Recreation Centre and a professional tennis coach to consider a way forward to keep and promote tennis in the town. Views consistently expressed both by the professional coach and the representative from the Recreation Centre were that grass was not the preferred surface for teaching youngsters, because of the low and variable bounce of the ball. Hard courts were the favoured option.

The Recreation Centre had agreed that, if the Town Council wished, they could let the grass courts to the public at £6 per hour in the same manner as with the letting of the hard courts. They would want to advertise and promote tennis both through the schools and to the general public. They hoped to set up professional tennis coaching on the hard courts at the weekends. This would mean that both grass and hard courts would be available for anyone, including groups, to play, seven days a week, (excluding school hours for the hard courts), including the prime evening times of 6 – 8pm. This and the grass courts were previously available for tennis club members only. The nets would be up on the grass courts all the time, as is the case with the hard courts.

Cllr Wiseman opined that it was a long way for players to walk from booking a court at the Recreation Centre to the courts and back again and wondered if it would be possible for players to use the main pavilion for changing.

The Clerk informed members that this could only be achieved by the appointment of additional staff and unfortunately this was not an option due to the high cost of ensuring that a member of staff was on duty.

The Council's Grounds Foreman advised the Committee that the tennis pavilion had been in its present unkempt state for a long time. The inside looked derelict and a window went unrepaired for eighteen months. The building had been boarded up by the grounds staff but was still being constantly vandalised. The pavilion is the property of the Town Council but the adjoining toilets were the property of the Tennis Club. The roof of the toilets had been leaking for many months. The Tennis Club was responsible for all maintenance.

The Town Clerk asked Members to consider whether they wished to increase the height of one section of the fence where it was thought that vandals were gaining access to the grass courts area, which was estimated to cost in the region of £800. An alternative, if the tennis pavilion was taken down, would be to remove all the fencing around the pavilion and secure only the grass courts themselves with high fencing. This would involve the provision of a small section of extra fencing, at less cost.

Cllr Wiseman urged the Committee not to make a hasty decision with regard to taking down the tennis pavilion.

In view of the recurring vandalism to the pavilion and the absence of a tennis club to use it, Cllr Cole proposed that the tennis pavilion be demolished. This was seconded by Cllr Ford. There were four Members in favour and two against.

Members discussed whether the Council should advertise in some way to promote tennis in the town, perhaps by providing funding for publicity and by sponsoring a tennis tournament at the end of the summer. Funds would need to be allocated for this.

RESOLVED:

That Policy & Finance Committee be advised that following further consideration of the advice from Ringwood Recreation Centre and a tennis professional, the disbandment of the Tennis Club, usage

arrangements of the courts, cost of maintenance of the grass courts and of repairing vandal damage to the pavilion, the continued provision of tennis facilities at Carvers should be on the basis:

(a) that Ringwood Recreation Centre (Ringwood Health & Leisure) be asked to take bookings for the tennis grass courts at £6 per hour, on the same basis as for the letting of the hard courts;

(b) that £500 be allocated for a possible tennis tournament and to promote public tennis in the town; and

(c) that the tennis pavilion be taken down and the grass tennis courts secured with high fencing on all sides.

OS/4912 LAND AT ASHLEY

The Clerk reported that he had written to both the Woodland Trust and Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust to enquire whether either organisation was interested in taking over the management of the site from the Town Council. A negative response had been received from both organisations as the land was too small and too far away from other sites managed by either of them. The Clerk advised that the Council maintains the status quo and leave the management as it is at present.

RESOLVED: that the status quo regarding management of the land at Ashley be maintained.

OS/4913 LAND AT LONG LANE

Members were asked to consider a quotation for the installation of dragons teeth on the grass verge at the junction of Long Lane/Moortown Lane. This was to stop vehicles parking on the verge, thus blocking sight lines and also was contrary to the Planning Consent which had been granted to the Town Council for the use of football pitches on the Ten Acre Field. Parents had been requested to park in the Football Club car park but many had not been doing so and complaints from local residents had been received.

Members agreed that the quotation for 30 posts and installation was acceptable and requested that the clerk proceed with getting the dragons teeth installed. The Clerk was also requested to contact the landowner of the field on the opposite corner and investigate the cost of installing dragons teeth on that verge also.

Cllr Wiseman reported that there was a large amount of rubbish on the ten-acre field. She was advised that a litter bin had now been installed.

RESOLVED:

(a) that the Clerk proceed with the installation of dragons teeth on the grass verge next to the ten acre field at the junction of Long Lane/Moortown Lane and

(b) that the Clerk contact the landowner of the field on the opposite corner and investigate the cost of installing dragons teeth on that verge also.

OS/4914 PLAY AREA SAFETY INSPECTION REPORT

Members considered the Play Area Inspection Report (ANNEX "A") which had been prepared by the Deputy Town Clerk following the annual inspection of the Council's play equipment by The Play Inspection Company.

The Clerk advised Members that the play equipment at Ash Grove was now in need of upgrading and asked Members to consider whether they wished to go forward with an improvement scheme for the play

area or whether they wished to remove the play equipment altogether. Members noted that in determining the future of the site it was important to take account of the needs of young people as well as any representations made by others.

The Clerk also advised that it would be necessary to consider filling in the void under the large slide on Carvers and re-grade the mound so that the grounds staff could use the appropriate equipment to cut the grass.

RESOLVED:

(a) that the action as outlined in ANNEX "A" be approved;

(b) that the Deputy Town be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee, to take the necessary action to eliminate risks identified as medium or high in the inspector's report;

(c) that the void under the large slide at Carvers be filled in and the mound regraded; and

(d) that the residents of Ash Grove and properties in the vicinity of the Ash Grove Play Area be asked whether or not they wished the Council to retain and upgrade the Ash Grove Play Area or whether they would prefer it to be removed.

**OS/4915
RINGWOOD FLOOD DEFENCE SCHEME**

The Clerk asked Members to consider acceptance of the maintenance arrangements for flood defence works undertaken on the Council's land at The Bickerley.

RESOLVED:

That the Council accepts the maintenance arrangements for flood defence works undertaken on the Council's land at The Bickerley.

**OS/4916
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 'B').

**OS/4917
LAND ADJOINING SCOUT HUT, STRIDES LANE AND AT THE REAR OF RINGWOOD SOCIAL CLUB,
WEST STREET**

The Clerk reported on a meeting between the Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman, the Town Clerk and members of the Management Committee of Ringwood Social Club regarding the possible acquisition of a strip of land between the Town Ditch and the Millstream from the Social Club in order to create a riverside walk from West Street to Pocket Park. The Social Club had agreed to take legal advice before proceeding further. The Clerk advised that the owners of the Scout Hut in Strides Lane were also considering the possibility of selling a strip of land to the Council for the continuation of a riverside walk. If it proved possible to acquire all the land required from Pocket Park to West Street, the District Council had already earmarked a strip of land at the rear of the bus station which would complete this section of the walk.

RESOLVED: that the Clerk's report be noted.

OS/4918**FOOTPATH BETWEEN RINGWOOD JUNIOR SCHOOL AND ITS PLAYING FIELDS IN PARSONAGE BARN LANE**

The Clerk advised that the footpath between the Junior School and its playing fields in Parsonage Barn Lane was owned by the Town Council and the School had held a Licence from the Council for many years to use it. The Council had agreed to sell the footpath to the County Council to create a permanent link between the school and its playing fields.

There was also a need to effect transfers of other areas between the County and the Town Council. The County Council had been requested to deal with all of these as part of one transaction but its officers wished to negotiate each separately as the County Council's land was under the control of different departments. The Town Clerk did not believe that this was a cost effective or satisfactory way for small transfers between authorities to be dealt with and sought the committee's approval to continue to seek all exchanges to be dealt with as one transaction.

RESOLVED:

That the Town Clerk be authorised to continue to seek the current proposed exchanges of land between the County and Town Councils as one transaction.

OS/4919**TEN-ACRE FIELD**

The Town Clerk reported that the general arrangements for the sub lease of the ten-acre field had been agreed. However, under the lease to the District Council there was a provision which would enable the District Council to extend the term by a further ten years. This option would be triggered by the District Council serving notice on the owners.

In view of the importance of the field to the town and the development works undertaken by the Town Council, the Town Clerk had asked the District Council to include a provision in the sub lease which would enable the Town Council to trigger the ten year option, providing the Town Council undertook to meet any costs in connection therewith. The District Council officers had refused to accept the request on the basis that the District Council might have different priorities at that time.

The Town Clerk had argued that this facility was only of benefit to Ringwood and in the spirit of true partnership, the District Council should be prepared to accept this reasonable request from the Town Council and the option to extend the lease should fall solely with the Town Council if it was prepared to meet all associated costs.

Members concurred with the Town Clerk's view and Cllr Cracknell indicated that he had already tried to arrange a meeting with the Assistant Director of Leisure Services to discuss this issue.

RESOLVED: that the Town Clerk and Cllr Cracknell be authorised to discuss the situation with the Assistant Director of Leisure Services and that the Town Clerk should seek either assignment of the head lease to the Town Council immediately in lieu of a sub lease or an inclusion in the sub lease of a provision which will enable the Town Council to trigger the implementation of the ten year extension of the head lease.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.08 pm.