

OPEN SESSION: There were three members of the public present, two of whom wished to speak.

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

Held on Wednesday 23rd May 2007 at 7.10pm

Apologies

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

Declarations of Interest

Cllr Daly declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 5(b) as he is Chairman of Ringwood Cricket Club and said that he would withdraw from the meeting during discussion and voting on this item. Cllr Terry, as President of the Bowls Club, declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 5(b).

PRESENT: Cllr M F Daly
Cllr N J Chard
Cllr D E Cracknell
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 L A Wickens, P A to the Town Clerk

OS/4902 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meetings held on 4th April 2007 and 16th May 2007, having been circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record.

OS/4903 BICKERLEY/POCKET PARK

The Town Clerk requested that items **(a)** and **(c)** be taken together. He advised members that the Landscape Architect was preparing a contract document for the works to be carried out. However, it appeared that more emphasis may be being placed on creating a wildlife area rather than the quiet sitting area which the committee had envisaged for that end of The Bickerley. The Town Clerk therefore suggested that three members of the committee should meet with the Landscape Architect on site to talk through the proposals for the area to ensure that the scheme met the criteria already agreed by the committee.

(b) The Town Clerk reported that, to date, only one response from a company in the town to the Council's Press Release had been received expressing interest in sponsorship of trees. It was hoped that further mentions in the local press would elicit more companies and residents coming forward.

RESOLVED:

(a) that Cllrs Daly, Chard and Wiseman meet on site at The Bickerley with the Landscape Architect to talk through the proposals for the area to ensure that they meet the criteria already agreed by the committee and

(b) that further press coverage be sought in order to elicit more interest in sponsorship of trees and seats on The Bickerley.

OS/4904

TENNIS FACILITIES

Before discussion of this item, Cllr Wiseman asked permission of the Chairman to make a statement. She said that, as a member of the public, she had attended a Council meeting last year when it was apparent from what was said that the Tennis Club was struggling. She felt that there had been a lack of positive help from the Town Council. The Tennis Club had been in existence for sixty years in the town. Cllr Wiseman said she felt that Carvers was a good place for tennis as it sat well alongside cricket and football.

With regard to the hard tennis courts, Cllr Wiseman said that these were also not inviting.

She suggested setting up a working party or sub committee to try to salvage something from this situation.

The Chairman said that the Tennis Club was the only club using Carvers which received a subsidy from the Town Council. For the benefit of new members, he asked the Town Clerk to give a brief resume of the history of tennis facilities.

The Clerk said that maintenance of the grass courts had been subsidised for twenty years. At the beginning, the Council met 75% of the costs. Over the years, as agreed, the percentage paid by the Club was gradually increased and the Club was now expected to cover all of the costs. Over the period the subsidy had amounted to over £20,000.

When the three hard courts were installed, partly with the help of a Lottery Grant, a tripartite committee made up of the Council, Ringwood School and the Tennis Club was formed to agree on usage and maintenance matters. Later, this was formally disbanded with the agreement of all parties and the Club advised that they could contact the Council at any time regarding matters concerning the hard courts.

The Clerk, referring to more recent times, said that the club had agreed to put up signs with contact details so that the public could book the grass courts, but this had not been done. The tennis pavilion had been in its present unkempt state for at least nine months. In January this year, officers and members of the Club attended a meeting of the Committee and made a firm commitment to pay this year's maintenance charges and also last year's charges by 2008. It was now apparent that the Club had folded and the Council would not be receiving any payment.

The Town Council had provided significant support to the Tennis Club and had encouraged the Club to increase its membership and funds. The Council fully supported tennis facilities but was concerned about the continuing subsidy to the Club. The hard courts were available to the public and could be booked through the Recreation Centre. In view of the debt owed to the Council and the refusal by the Club to pay for any maintenance, he could not allow the Club to have free use of the facilities and to protect the council's interests, had locked the courts.

The Clerk distributed photographs of the tennis pavilion which had been taken that morning. In order to prevent further vandalism at the tennis pavilion, he had asked the Council's grounds foreman to provide costs for Council staff to secure the building.

The Clerk suggested that members might wish to consider making the grass courts available for public use either on a franchise basis or via the Recreation Centre as their staff were already taking bookings for the hard courts.

Cllr Cracknell said he was very sad that we had arrived at this situation but he felt that it was entirely the fault of the Tennis Club. He did not want young people blamed for the closure of the Club.

Cllr Terry said there was a need for a tennis facility in the town and felt that this Council should work with the Recreation Centre to book the grass courts for public use and perhaps encourage some coaching. He opined that grass is very expensive to maintain and most towns have now moved away from grass courts to modern hard surfaces instead.

The Chairman then suspended Standing Orders in order that Mr Roger Titley could speak.

Mr Titley said that the Tennis Club had lost too many members and had effectively closed. He wished to see the continuation of tennis in Ringwood. He said that the dreadful state of the pavilion must be due to very recent vandalism as the pavilion had been satisfactory a few weeks earlier.

Standing Orders were reinstated.

Cllr Cracknell said that the Tennis Club was non-existent and the Council must now decide on the way forward.

Cllr Terry proposed that the grass courts continue to be prepared by Town Council staff and netted and that the Recreation Centre be asked to take bookings from the public on an hourly basis, the tariff to be set by the Town Council.

Cllr Cracknell proposed free use of the grass courts and nets by the public.

Cllr Ford did not agree with free use of the grass courts.

Cllr Terry's proposal that the grass courts continue to be prepared by Town Council staff and netted and that the Recreation Centre be asked to take bookings from the public on an hourly basis, the tariff to be set by the Town Council was put to members. This was agreed.

The Town Clerk reminded members that a decision must be made with regard to the tennis pavilion. Cllr Cracknell proposed that the pavilion be taken down. This was agreed.

Members then discussed use of the hard courts and agreed that the times set aside for Tennis Club use should now go into general public use.

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) that temporary works to the Tennis Pavilion be made to secure it, using Town Council grounds staff to carry out the work;

(b) that the grass courts continue to be prepared by Town Council staff and netted and that the Recreation Centre be asked to take bookings from the public on an hourly basis, the tariff to be set by the Town Council;

(c) that the times set aside for Tennis Club use of the hard courts be included in that allocated for general public use and

(d) that quotations should be sought for the taking down of the tennis pavilion.

OS/4905

ASH GROVE PLAY AREA

The Town Clerk reported that he had been approached by a film company who wished to film a short educational video on teenage pregnancy, funded by Right to Life and to be shown in schools, in one of the Council's play parks. Two swings in a line were required. The Clerk had suggested that the Ash Grove play area might be a suitable location and the film company was checking to see if it met their requirements. The Committee agreed that it had no objection to the filming taking place.

RESOLVED: that the Town Council has no objection to Ash Grove Play Area being used by a film company to make a short educational video on teenage pregnancy.

OS/4906

CARVERS RECREATION GROUND

(a) Movement detector facility

The Town Clerk asked the Committee to consider the installation of a movement detector facility on Carvers to deter vandalism. The cost would be approximately £500/£600, which was not in the Committee's present budget. Members agreed that the installation of such a facility could be of benefit but account would need to be taken of the proximity of residential properties to make sure that the light did not cause a problem.

Cllr Daly left the room during discussion and voting on the following agenda item. Cllr Chard took the chair.

(b) Refurbishment work to the pavilion

The Clerk reminded members that it had been agreed that Medcentres would carry out the refurbishment of the pavilion but the own Council had decided it could carry out the work itself. A contract had been let for the design works but the contractor had not fulfilled his obligations and the contract was cancelled. Work was now urgently required to refit the kitchen area, redecorate the main room and fit new duckboards in the showers. Some of this work could be done shortly and would not interfere with use of the facilities by the cricket clubs with the remainder being carried out during the winter months. The total budget for the refurbishment work was £25,000 but it was anticipated that the work would come in well under budget.

RESOLVED:

(a) that Policy & Finance Committee be requested to approve a supplementary budget of £1,000 for the purchase and installation of movement detector equipment and lights for Carvers Recreation Ground; and

(b) that the Clerk's report on the programme of refurbishment works to the pavilion be received.

OS/4907

MILLSTREAM

The Clerk reported that he had received a request for permission to be granted to set eel traps in the part of the Millstream under the ownership of the Town Council for the teaching of rural skills to a local Scout group.

RESOLVED:

That permission be granted to set eel traps in the part of the Millstream under the ownership of the Town Council for the teaching of rural skills to a local Scout group, subject to the Scouts' organisation agreeing to check and empty the traps at least twice each day.

OS/4908

LIVING RIVER PROJECT

The Clerk reminded members that a grant of up to £8,000 had been awarded to the Town Council towards the refurbishment of the Pocket Park. He had been requested by the Living River Project Manager to speak at the launch of the project, explaining how the Council hoped the grant would help achieve its aims for the enhancement of the area.

RESOLVED:

That the information be received.

OS/4909

ACCESS ROAD TO POULNER LAKES

The Town Clerk advised the new Members of the Committee that when the Council had purchased land at Poulner Lakes it had believed that this included the whole of the road. However, the road had not been shown correctly on the plans and the Land Registry had advised that the road as drawn, was not wholly in the ownership of the Town Council. Statutory Declarations had been completed, but these did not meet the required criteria.

The Council's solicitors were at present in the process of seeking a Deed of Rectification from the original owners of the site to say that the whole of the road was in the ownership of the Town Council. The Clerk reiterated that until this had been finalised it would not be advisable to carry out any remedial works to the road. It was probable that the Council would be asked to pay the original owner's legal fees.

RESOLVED:

(a) that the Town Clerk proceed with negotiations to confirm the Council's legal ownership of the road at Poulner Lakes and

(b) that the original owner's legal fees be paid, if necessary.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.20 pm.