

LEIGHTON-LINSLADE TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF GROUNDS & ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
MONDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2022 AT 7.30 PM

Present: Councillors R Berry (Chair)
 S Jones (Vice-Chair)
 T Morris
 C Palmer
 V Harvey
 P Carberry
 P Snelling
 F Kharawala
 S Owen
 S Hemmings (substituting for R Yates)

Also in attendance: I Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental
 Services
 S Sandiford, Deputy Town Clerk
 M Jahn, Committee Officer
 S Mooring (Head of Sustainable Development,
 Central Bedfordshire Council) – part meeting

Members of the public: 8 (part meeting)
Members of the press 0

191/GE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Spurr (substituted by Councillor Kharawala), Councillor Gray (substituted by Councillor Owen) and Councillor Yates (substituted by Councillor Hemmings) and from the Town Clerk.

192/GE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor V Harvey declared a personal interest as a member of South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth.

Councillor C Palmer declared a personal interest as a member of the Friends of Leighton-Linslade in Bloom and as an allotment holder within the parish.

No pecuniary interests were declared.

193/GE QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A member of the public spoke to highlight the difference in cemetery fees for residents and non-residents and asked for the Town Council's Resident Definition to be reviewed. He felt the definition did not take into account past resident status or that suitable care might not be available within the parish.

This would be discussed later in the agenda.

A second member of the public spoke regarding her allotment at Alwins Field and the problem of plots not being worked for several years whilst the waiting list was growing. Another member of the public spoke regarding their allotment at Weston Avenue and agreed that the overgrown untended allotments caused problems for regular allotment holders and although agreeing with the proposed recommendations on the Allotments Update report, thought that more regular inspections were needed and the number of hours stated to work a half plot each week be amended to a more realistic figure. This would be discussed further at item 6 on the agenda.

194/GE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

(a) The Committee received the draft minutes of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee meeting held on 6 June 2022.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee meeting held on 6 June 2022 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

(b) Minute reference 185/GE Henry Finch Memorial Fountain – it was confirmed the cleaning of this would begin on 6 September 2022.

Members were informed that both War Memorials in Leighton-Linslade had been Grade II listed and planning permission now had to be obtained for them to be cleaned. The War Memorial Trust had deemed the memorials to be in "too good" a condition to be cleaned at present.

Minute reference 186/GE Leighton Town Boxing Club – no updates had been received from either the Boxing Club or Central Bedfordshire Council in respect of a permanent premises for the club.

195/GE ALLOTMENTS UPDATE

The Committee received an update on the waiting lists for town council-owned allotments and the need to manage tenancies to ensure plots were being worked adequately. In discussion with the Allotment Association, it was proposed to introduce a probationary period and a minimum commitment of 15 hours per week.

A query was raised regarding the frequency of inspections and plot re-allocations. The Committee was advised that more plots had been re-allocated in 2021 than in the previous 4 years but that, unfortunately, those new plot-holders had not all been able to commit to adequate maintenance of their allotment. It was suggested that going forward, and more regular updates could be provided to councillors on the number of plot tenancies withdrawn and issued.

The Committee was supportive of a probationary period but noted that enforcement would be key. It was proposed that in addition to the 6-month probation, a check-in at 3 months should take place.

The Committee felt that the figure stated in the report of a minimum of 15 hours a week to get the plot up to standard was too high and would deter anyone from working full-time hours. In discussion, it was proposed that this be amended to "an average of 7 hours per week", noting that the commitment was greater during the growing season.

Members agreed that any prospective applicant should be informed of the commitment needed to work a plot to set realistic expectations about the level of work involved. It was suggested that more information could be added to the Allotments page on the website to reiterate what was involved in terms of time and commitment.

A question was asked as to whether there were enough staff in the Grounds and Environmental Services Team to proactively manage the allotment function. The Committee was advised that officers worked in partnership with the Allotment Association, who were considered the "eyes and ears on the ground". However, it was proposed that staffing levels be reviewed.

The Committee voted on each point of the recommendation separately.

RESOLVED to note the report. (9 in favour, 1 abstention by Councillor Harvey).

RESOLVED to endorse the introduction of a probationary period for the first six months, with a three-month check-in of all new tenancy agreements. This would allow the council to terminate a lease during this period due to lack of cultivation or any breach of the Allotment Terms and Conditions by issuing a warning letter and then final notice. During the probationary period, there is no right of appeal. (agreed unanimously)

RESOLVED to endorse a joint review of the Allotment agreement with the Leighton Linlade Allotment Association (LLAA) to include minimum acceptable cultivation levels of seven hours per week on average. (9 in favour, 1 abstention)

RECOMMENDED to the Personnel Sub-Committee to review staffing levels for management of the allotments function. (9 in favour, 1 abstention).

All but one member of the public left at 20:32 hours.

196/GE CAR PARK AT LINSLADE MEMORIAL PLAYING FIELDS AND GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

Stephen Mooring, Head of Sustainable Development at Central Bedfordshire Council gave a presentation regarding Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging and Parking Management in Leighton-Linslade.

Following feasibility studies, it was proposed that charging points be installed in two car parks in the town. The car parks proposed were Linslade Memorial Playing Field Car Park (owned by the Town Council) and Baker Street Car Park (owned by Central Bedfordshire Council). This would be a rolling programme of installation with these being the starter points in the area.

In discussions between officers, concerns had been raised regarding the car park being left open overnight. In addition, the Town Council's concern about managing commuters and other parking not related to the direct use of the Memorial Playing Field or Garden of Remembrance had been flagged up. Central Bedfordshire Council had been asked about potential for support with enforcement in accordance with the Town Council's five year plan (objective number 44).

By way of mitigation it was therefore proposed by Central Bedfordshire Council to introduce controlled parking by way of tickets. Control would not apply to vehicles using the charging points or to approved users of the Memorial Pavilion, to whom the Town Council could issue parking permits.

Concerns were raised regarding the capacity of the Central Bedfordshire enforcement team to manage this additional scheme and it was suggested that tickets should also be obtained for vehicles being charged. Concerns remained regarding the potential for overnight vandalism and whether the existing CCTV coverage would be sufficient to deter this.

The Committee recognised the necessity of providing charging facilities for residents without access to home charging and also recognised the need to encourage more sustainable travel. It was agreed to support the proposal in principle and were all in favour to work with Central Bedfordshire Council on this important project. The detail would need to be presented formally for approval by Council.

RECOMMENDED to Council to consider approval of the installation of Electric Vehicle charging points in Linslade Memorial Playing Field and Garden of Remembrance car park, subject to provision of greater detail in respect of the proposed arrangements.

197/GE COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORK PLAN

The Committee received and considered the Committee Work Plan for 2022-2023.

RESOLVED to note the Committee Objectives and Work Plan.

198/GE GREEN FLAG RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee received an update of the recent feedback received from the Green Flag Award Scheme 2022/2023. The feedback and comments from the judges would be assessed and where appropriate, would be the subject of future work.

Members gave a vote of thanks to all volunteers for their continued work on all community gardens especially noting the success of Linslade Recreation Ground.

RESOLVED to note the report and to express thanks to all the volunteers who had contributed to the five Green Flag awards for 2022.

199/GE SKATE PARK CONDITION AND FUTURE

The Committee received an update on the condition of the skate park in Parson's Close Recreation Ground and considered the potential of going out to tender to its refurbishment based on the condition report. A question was raised on how long this refurbishment would last and it was hoped it would last for approximately ten years.

RESOLVED

- (a) To note the report.**
- (b) To endorse that tenders be received for a refurbishment of the current skate park.**

200/GE PARSON'S CLOSE RECREATION GROUND - INCLUSIVE PLAY AREA PROJECT UPDATE

The Committee received a verbal update on the inclusive adventure play area refurbishment project including a video of the opening day event. It was agreed this had been a highly successful project.

RESOLVED to note the update.

The issue of antisocial behaviour in the park was raised, with recent incidence of vandalism discussed. This was disappointing and it was suggested that civil action should be taken where possible due to the damages incurred, although noted this might not be feasible where offenders were under eighteen years of age.

RECOMMENDED to Council to consider taking civil action against perpetrators who damage Town Council assets, where this course of

action was supported by legal advice.

201/GE DRINKING WATER FOUNTAINS

The Committee received a report regarding the installation of drinking water fountains in larger Town Council owned parks and considered the recommendations therein.

RESOLVED

(a) To note the report.

(b) To endorse the purchase and installation of 4 ELKAY LK4400BF - EZH2O outdoor bottle filling stations in green, for a total project value of £15,476.50 to be funded from 925/9503 with the available funds of £25,000.

202/GE THREE MONTH BUDGET MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received a budget monitoring report for the period April – June 2022. It was reported that facility hire income looked set to exceed budgeted income and that as repairs and maintenance costs had also been high, officers would formally ask to increase the repairs and maintenance revenue budget line at the next committee meeting in December, with the overspend being offset by the excess income.

RESOLVED to note the report.

203/GE VANDYKE ROAD CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROJECTS

The Committee received an update on the possible projects in the Vandyke Road area using the recently received capital funds from the sale of land. This followed a decision by the Policy and Finance Committee that receipts should be used for capital expenditure. Recommendations were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED to note the report.

RECOMMENDED to Council to endorse the funding of the following five projects from the capital receipts obtained from sale of land at Vandyke Road:

(i) Installation of adult outdoor gym £45,000.

ii) Improvement to Vandyke Road Playing Field play area £25,000.

iii) Creation of a newly constructed footpath £20,000.

iv) Creation of a new compound within Vandyke Road Cemetery £30,000.

v) Contribution to creating a new community woodland circa £20,000.

204/GE EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded on the grounds of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. The public and press to withdraw from the meeting during consideration of detailed discussion regarding the Climate Emergency Update and the Cemetery Service.

205/GE CLIMATE EMERGENCY UPDATE

The Committee received a report to consider appointing consultancy support, training and reporting technology to allow the completion of the baseline reporting exercise, which would then lead to the development of a carbon reduction plan in keeping with the 2030 timeframe.

RESOLVED:

- (a) To note the report.**
- (b) To appoint SmartCarbon Ltd as the consultancy support to Leighton-Linslade Town Council to undertake a full and necessary evaluation of the Town Council's current Carbon Footprint and thereafter to assist in the development of an outline Carbon Reduction Plan.**
- (c) To agree, a total of £22,650 be funded from cost centre 301/4373 Climate Change Emergency with available funds of £30,000 as set out at paragraphs 4.1-4.7 of the report.**

It was proposed and seconded that in order to continue the meeting past 2200 hours, Standing Order 3(x) be suspended for a maximum of thirty minutes.

RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3(x) for a maximum of thirty minutes.

206/GE CEMETERY SERVICE

The Committee received a report regarding the current definition of a resident, which was applied to cemetery fees and charges. There was no standard definition, but in comparison with other burial authorities, it was felt that the definition was generous. Changing the definition retrospectively could have financial implications, but changing the definition moving forward was possible. This was an emotive and sensitive topic, and it was understood that the charging of non-resident fees could be difficult for those bereaved.

It was suggested that legal advice be sought and that the matter be brought back to Council for a determination. On being put to the vote, this was carried (6 in favour, 4 abstentions).

RESOLVED that legal advice be sought in respect of non-resident cemetery fees and for the matter to be brought back to Council for decision.

207/GE OUZEL VALLEY PARK STEERING GROUP UPDATE

The Committee received the minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2022. A further meeting had been held today and the minutes would be received at the following meeting of the Committee. A verbal update was given on the creation of an open spaces map, with committee approval sought to remove the ownership/responsibility of sites listed as this added unnecessary complication from a user perspective.

RESOLVED to note the minutes of the Ouzel Valley Park Steering Group meeting held on 25 May 2022 and to endorse that information regarding site ownership was not necessary for inclusion on the emerging Open Spaces map.

208/GE LEIGHTON-LINSLADE AND HEATH & REACH SANDPIT STEERING GROUP

The Committee received the notes of the meeting held on 12 July 2022 and considered the recommendations contained therein.

The recommendation that councillors review the green infrastructure plan and how this would fit in with the current restoration plan for Grovebury Quarry was considered. It was noted that the original plan had been developed by the Greensand Trust and suggested that costs should be sought from them regarding its review, with a delegated decision to come back to this committee.

A question was raised regarding the time limit for the S106 money allocated for Grovebury Quarry; officers would liaise with Central Bedfordshire Council on this.

RESOLVED to note the information.

209/GE POLLINATION

Councillor V Harvey presented the following Motion to the Committee: "In order to support pollinators and to provide an attractive display to those walking in the parks in Spring, this Council will spend £10,000 from Earmarked Reserves in this financial year, on planting bulbs which will create a swathe of colour across three parks from February to May."

It was proposed the work be undertaken by a commercial contractor but queries were raised regarding maintenance, grass cutting, impact on park users and the need for a planting plan.

Whilst supportive of the need for greater biodiversity and recognising the importance of the town's parks for the enjoyment of residents, concerns were expressed about the sum proposed given the current economic climate and cost of living crisis.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was not carried (2 in favour, 6 against, 2 abstentions).

RESOLVED that the Motion not be carried.

210/GE REVIEW PRIORITY PROJECTS FOR INCLUSION IN 2023-2024 BUDGET

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

The meeting closed at 10.30 pm.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A CORRECT AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER 2022.

Chair

5 December 2022