

CENTRAL SWINDON NORTH PARISH COUNCIL

LEISURE & RECREATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 21st July 2020 by virtual meeting.

Present Cllr M Lucas (Chair)
Cllr S Thompson (Vice-chair)
Cllr J Ballman
Cllr R Ballman
Cllr J Yeowell

Officers A Reeves
A Briggs
A Cripps
H Armagan

Meeting Started at 7.04pm.

Public

None

96 **Apologies**

None received

97 **Declarations of Interest & Applications for Dispensation**

Cllrs J Ballman & S Thompson declared a non-pecuniary interest that they are members of HBUF

98 **Minutes from the previous meeting**

There are no minutes to review or approve.

99 **CSNPC Libraries**

The Libraries Manager summarised the current position of Swindon Borough Council libraries.

Swindon Libraries as with most municipal buildings closed at the start of lockdown but have been working on their plans to reopen having set up a 'libraries collective' organisation to review advice and publish reopening documentation.

This document has been used to assist CSNPC in planning the reopening of their library assets.

SBC have started by setting up a click and collect service for residents who may order a book online or via the phone, which can then be collected from the library hub. The intention is for the Parish to implement a similar modal for its own service.

Initially, the click and collect would mean that Individuals would not be able to loiter in the libraries or use other services such as scanning or printing.

Depending on the success of this service the next phase would move to limited browsing. Limiting visit to approx. 30 mins and ensuring all visitors adhered to social distancing rules.

Groups such as 'Knitter Natter' have expressed interest in returning to use the facilities when measures allow.

The Library Manager went on to explain that it is the intention of the Parish to open all libraries as of 1st September 2020 with a click and collect service, with Moredon & Rodbourne Cheney library being piloted as the first to reopen.

To assist with this process the recruitment of 1 member of library staff has taken place, who has been successfully trained on the new library management system. He would then look to employ the remaining staff from mid-August onward to allow for relevant training to take place.

Service at Moredon & Rodbourne Cheney library to commence week of 27th August.

Work to be undertaken around online provisions and marketing things such as e-books, and magazines. The parish have also successfully acquired an online comic collection.

Cllr J Ballman recognises the good work that it being carried out by Officers. He asked how information is being publicised to members of the public, i.e. via social media.

The library manager explained that all social media channels have been used and will be used to provide relevant information about the resumption of the library services. The library website will also be used to provide regular updates along with utilisation of the email distribution list held on file.

Cllr J Ballman asked whether we should expect to see the information online over the coming weeks. A Briggs responded that the Parish have published library opening dates on their Facebook and Twitter accounts and that posts can be made to advertise the services moving forward.

Cllr M Lucas asked if notices couldn't be placed on the library doors for all those that visit in person. The Libraries Manager acknowledged and confirmed that he has been creating signage to be placed at entrance points and hoped to have this completed shortly.

Cllr J Yeowell asked for clarification on how the click and collect service works. The Libraries Manager explained individuals could browse the library catalogue online and reserve a book. A member of staff would locate the book and contact the person to inform them that it would be available for collection within specified opening hours. Individuals may also telephone or email the library branch to request books.

Cllr J Yeowell queried the Covid safety measures in place. The Libraries Manager explained that the Parish would be requesting that masks are worn when inside the library building. Signage would be prominently displayed and a record kept of individuals that enter the premises in case an outbreak occurs.

100 Grant Funding - Purchase of Tractor

Cllr Mick Lucas introduced the item and explained the discussion was to focus on whether the Parish still wish to proceed with acceptance of the grant funding for the purchase of a tractor. It was advised that if Cllrs wished to acquire the machinery the recommendation would be taken back to the Finance & General Purposes Committee due to the additional operational revenue costs. Cllrs were asked to comment.

The Estates Manager followed up by giving an apology for the length of time the project had been ongoing, which was due to various reasons outside of his control. i.e. lease agreements and Covid19 restrictions. The Estates Manager went on to explain that the landscape had since changed from the resolution of June 2019; to where the council are now with their ground's maintenance contractor Idverde, who are commissioned to undertake the general maintenance of the grass turf pitches.

However, the option remained to capitalise on the FA grant funding of £24,000 which had already been offered. The question was asked whether the Parish still required a tractor in conjunction with the Idverde contract. If yes, the revision of operational costs would need to be considered.

A list of Pros & Cons had been issued prior to the meeting and Cllrs were reminded to review these.

Cllr S Thompson asked why a list pros & cons had been provided. The Estates Manager explained that the list was drafted to aid Cllrs with their decision.

Cllr J Ballman also queried why a list of pros and cons has been provided and asked whether the Parish were in receipt of the grant funding from the FA.

The Estates Manager & Cllr M Lucas confirmed the funding had been approved but was subject to the final condition of the Mannington Lease being provided.

Cllr S Thompson felt the future of the HBUF Charity may be in jeopardy as a result of not purchasing the machinery. He stated that the decision was made at Full Council and the committee could not override that decision.

Cllr M Lucas confirmed the original decision was to investigate possible funding options with the help of the Grants Manager and for the Parish to purchase a tractor in conjunction with HBUF that could be used to both upgrade the football pitches and service the needs of the charity.

Cllr S Thompson explained the tractor would not be sublet because the charity would be providing money towards the purchase.

Cllr R Ballman asked why the decision needed to be taken back to the Finance Committee as the decision to purchase the tractor had already been agreed.

The Estates Manager explained that the decision was taken on an inhouse grounds maintenance model that would have seen 1 F/T and 1 P/T employee operate the machinery and undertake maintenance and improvement to the sports facilities. The requirement of these staff had now been usurped due to the conditions within the Idverde maintenance schedule for grass cutting and line marking.

Cllr J Ballman commented that the conditions imposed by the FA for use of the tractor were subject to some flexibility if the machine was predominantly used for its main purpose.

It was commented that the parish employ an Allotments Officer who could make use of the tractor across the Leisure Gardens for various maintenance jobs.

Cllr J Ballman queried whether the budget allocation already allowed for 2 members of staff and referred to meetings held in 2019 with representatives from external companies.

Cllr M Lucas acknowledged that the committee were in agreement that grant funding is pursued for the purchase of a tractor and recommended that the decision is taken to Full Council for revision of the ongoing revenue costs and final decision.

Cllr J Ballman stated that the decision to purchase the tractor has already been agreed.

Cllr M Lucas stated that there would be delays due to the Mannington Recreation Ground lease.

The Clerk advised that the lease for Mannington had been received and that officers were ready to sign & return. However, before doing so it was noted that the car park had not been included within the plan. Subsequently, awaiting the rectification of this in a comfort letter from Kathy Sherratt caused a delay.

Cllr S Exell explained that the decision taken in June 2019 was outside of the 6-month rule and would be reviewed at an Extraordinary Council meeting.

Cllr J Ballman queried the Extraordinary meeting referred to. Cllr S Exell stated that there was no Full Council meeting scheduled for August but the Chair of the Parish had called for one to take place and a date would be provided shortly.

Cllr M Lucas asked that the decision on the tractor purchase be taken to the Extraordinary Council meeting.

Cllr J Ballman asked the committee to reaffirm the decision; that subject to the completion of the Mannington lease, it had been agreed that the joint purchase of the tractor should take place. Seconded by Cllr S Thompson.

A vote took place. 4 members voted in favour of purchasing a tractor.

RESOLVED to proceed with the original decision made in June 2019, to purchase a tractor subject to the Mannington lease being finalised.

The committee noted that the revenue costs of running the machinery would be discussed and resolved at the Extraordinary Full Council meeting to be held in August 2020.

101 Allotment Site Security & Compostable Toilets

A report detailing allotment security was circulated prior to the meeting. A copy of this report can be found as Annex A in the Minute Book.

Cllr S Thompson stated that a camera on Pinehurst Road would not be sufficient to cover activities within the Pickards Field Leisure Garden site as it was the second gate at the rear of the allotment that is left open by tenants. He advised that the best solution would be to weld the gates shut and direct traffic through one access point. The Estates Manager suggested taking this option to discussion with the Allotment Working Group.

In response to the suggested CCTV, positioning a camera(s) on the SALGA shop, which would give a better vantage point of the whole site, could be an option.

Cllr J Ballman asked whether the SALGA shop had reported any incidents and stated that theft from allotments has been a problem for many years. The Estates Manager

confirmed nothing had been reported directly by SALGA, but when meeting a contractor on site there was an excellent vantage point and potentially electricity that could be used via the existing buildings. This would need to be discussed with SALGA.

Cllr M Lucas proposed proceeding with the initial recommendation of setting up a Working Group meeting with the Estates Manager and site reps to discuss site security.

Cllr J Ballman commented that some allotment tenants may be against welding shut some of the access points which they are used to using and consultation would be needed.

Cllr S Thompson Proposed. Seconded by Cllr J Ballman.

A vote took place. 4 voted in favour.

RESOLVED that:

a) an Allotments Working Group meeting be arranged, and site reps and SALGA shop Reps be invited.

b) The Allotments Officer inspects the existing fence line of the sites for any excessive damage or unsecure points of access.

102 Review of Play Areas

A report detailing the condition of the play areas was circulated prior to the meeting. A copy of this can be found as Annex B in the Minute book.

Cllr M Lucas advised to proceed with recommendations for a Working Group to be set up with responsibility for reviewing the play areas in detail. The Working Group would be tasked with consulting with local user groups and residents to help shape a project plan for play areas improvements.

Cllr M Lucas stated that 2020/21 budget allocation for play areas was £35,000.

Cllr M Lucas asked for input from all Cllrs that wished to identify key works and improvements that needed to be undertaken at play areas within their wards.

The Estates Manager asked whether it was agreeable to set up a meeting to invite Cllrs in for discussion that can be noted and used to assist in a project plan. The Chair of the Committee agreed.

The Estates Manager confirmed Cllrs would be invited to a meeting at the beginning of August.

Cllr S Exell asked to be included in the meeting, as there are several play areas within her ward that she would like to comment on.

A vote took place. 4 voted in favour of the recommendation of the report.

RESOLVED that a Working Group meeting be arranged to discuss play areas, to which all Cllrs will be invited.

103 **Southbrook Car Park**

A report detailing the Southbrook compound was circulated prior to the meeting. A copy of this can be found as Annex C in the Minute Book.

Cllr M Lucas advised that the item was being bought back to the Committee for further discussion, following consideration at the previous Full Council meeting.

Cllr M Lucas commented that the existing car park may not be adequate to service the amount of traffic expected to use the facilities. He acknowledged that there would be a significant cost involved in the project and proposed the Estates Manager investigate more up to date figures that can be used in the budget forecast for the 2021/22 budget setting process.

Cllr J Ballman proposed that the Estates Manager is tasked with seeking up to date costings that can be bought back to a future committee meeting and then put forward for budgeting next year. Seconded by Cllr S Thompson.

4 voted in favour

RESOLVED that up to date costs for improvement works to the car parking facility at Southbrook Recreation be obtained and bought to a future meeting for further discussion and consideration for the 2021/22 budget setting process.

104 **St Marks Grasscrete Parking**

Cllr M Lucas advised Members that the lease for St Marks is yet to be signed and the asset transferred to the Parish.

The Parish Clerk confirmed this was outstanding and it was understood that the L< would manage the facility.

Cllr J Ballman advised that the car park was not for the exclusive use of the tennis pavilion but would be well used when tennis activity on site increased. It was mentioned that the car park was well used by an array of visitors using the facilities.

Cllr J Ballman queried why the Parish were not in receipt of the lease for the asset.

The Clerk confirmed the L< are responsible for the development of the facilities at St Marks. Discussions have been held with Ed Nieburg who manages the tennis provision on site as the Parish are keen to ensure he is supported in his operation. It has been highlighted from these discussions that the car park is continually used by unauthorised vehicles that park up without legitimate use of the area.

The Clerk suggested that due to the charitable aspect of the Trust the most prudent option would be to ask the Grants Manager to investigate possible funding options to support the development of the car parking facility. Another facet of the Trust would be to explore the options of enhanced parking enforcement of the car park, e.g. TRO, which could help successfully manage parking activity.

It was commented that the impact of Covid and change in working patterns could see the number of people illegitimately parking decrease.

The Clerk stated that St Marks is listed on the project plan for the L<. He also confirmed the lease for the site was received and ready to be signed. However, due to the sitting tenant 'Swindon Community Tennis' vacating, SBC were unable to ratify

the terms and a new agreement had to be drafted to reflect the new arrangement. This was with SBCs locum solicitor and the Parish were chasing completion.

Cllr J Ballman reaffirmed that the site is as a 'whole' and not exclusively the tennis courts. He asked if the car park could be addressed regardless of the pending lease.

Cllr J Ballman went on to provide an example of the improvements SBC carried out to the car park at Steam.

Cllr J Ballman proposed the Estates Manager seeks quotations for the extension of St Marks car park.

Cllr M Lucas suggested the Grants Officer also be tasked with exploring funding options available to the Trust to support the project.

Cllr S Exell highlighted that the lease for the site remains outstanding and asked why the project would be considered for quotes at this stage.

Cllr M Lucas responded that there wasn't a restriction on seeking costs that would aid the Councils decision on the project in future. Should the Grants Officer be unable to obtain grant funding the project would need to be bought back to Council for consideration in terms of the cost and viability.

Cllr J Ballman reiterated his proposal to seek quotes in the interim period.

Cllr S Henderson expressed concerns about seeking quotations without the lease being agreed, as any quotation sought may be invalid by the time works could be agreed.

Cllr J Ballman advised that quotations are given in two parts and include a breakdown of proposed works and costs. It was stated any change in cost would be a revision to any existing quotation.

Cllr R Ballman commented that person(s) who are not members of the Committee had made observations on the agenda item that could affect the decision when the proposal had been made and seconded.

Cllr S Henderson asked whether it was a breach of the Standing Orders to make comment on an agenda item. Cllr S Exell commented that her input was made prior to the proposal being made.

A vote took place. 4 voted in favour of the proposal

RESOLVED that:

- a) the costs be sought for extending the parking provision at St Marks Rec.
- b) the Grants Officer investigates what funding options are available to finance the project.
- c) both costs and funding options be brought back to a future meeting for further discussion.

105 HBUF Trustees

Cllr S Thompson advised that, considering the close working relationship of the Parish and the charity, the HBUF Committee had agreed to offer the Parish two trusteeships.

Cllr S Thompson formally offered the Parish two places on the trust.

Cllr J Ballman asked whether two places were being offered in addition to the two existing places. Cllr S Thompson confirmed it was two additional places.

Cllr M Lucas asked why HBUF required two additional trustees specifically from the Parish. Cllr S Thompson responded that it was not for financial reasons.

Cllr M Lucas asked whether the offer was in relation to the Parish one day assuming control of the trust. Cllr S Thompson abstained from commenting.

Cllr M Lucas stated that the positions were open to all members of the Parish Council.

Cllr S Henderson remarked that there could be a questionable view taken on the relationship of the two organisations and that there needed to be a clear separation of the charity and the Parish.

Comments Cllr S Thompson made on the future of the charity in conjunction with the purchase of a tractor were noted.

Cllr J Ballman commented that the views of Cllr S Thompson were expressed emotively and not as to provide a true reflection on the position of the charitable organisation. Cllr J Ballman went on to state that was not uncommon for members of Parish Councils to be involved in other areas and/or sit on committees of external organisations.

Cllr S Thompson commented that the Parish and the Trust had worked closely together over the last few years. He mentioned recent tree planting events when the Parish embargoed any further planting until an ecology survey could be completed.

Cllr S Henderson remarked that it is the charity offering two places on the trust and not the Parish.

Cllr S Thompson asked that the Parish appoint the trustees.

Cllr M Lucas stated that the Parish were not in a position to appoint Members to the positions offered. It is for individual members to express interest and choose to become a trustee. Cllr S Thompson confirmed appointment was on a voluntary basis.

The Parish Clerk confirmed ex officio roles were defined within the constitution of HBUF. It is then conveyed that an organic interest in becoming a member is preferential as opposed to statutory appointment or resolution of Council.

The Parish Clerk asked whether there was an issue with retention of members of the Trust and commented that previous advice given to the charity was that a sense of independence could be lost by having a greater Parish Council influence. Furthermore, there may also be a perceived conflict of interest with having members of the council sit on the trust.

It was asked whether all other options have been explored.

Cllr S Thompson remarked that it was an opportunity for the Parish to help shape the direction of the charity.

Cllr M Lucas stated that he would not have interest in becoming a trustee and asked whether there would be persons outside of the Parish that may suit the positions better.

The Parish Clerk suggested a Working Group could be set up to help shape the future of the charity and structure a better working relationship between both organisations. Cllr S Thompson agreed with the suggestion.

Cllr J Ballman agreed on the various points made and stated that now was a good time to craft the future of the charity.

Cllr J Yeowell asked whether the Trust could be merged into the L< in future. Cllr J Ballman responded that would be something for the charity to consider in the future.

Cllr S Henderson suggested the matter be brought to the planned Extraordinary Full Council meeting for discussion and to agree the Terms of Reference. Cllr S Thompson agreed but stated he would like the proposal to be taken forward by the committee.

Cllr S Thompsons confirmed the proposal was for two Trustee posts to be offered to Parish members.

Cllr S Thompson moved the proposal, seconded by Cllr J Ballman.

A vote took place. 4 voted in favour of the proposal, 1 abstained.

RESOLVED that the suggestion that two HBUF trustee positions be offered to Parish Council members is discussed at the Extraordinary Full Council meeting to be held in August 2020.

106 Rewilding Swindon (Wildflowers)

The Chair advised the Committee that a member of the public recently contacted the Parish regarding the growth of wildflower areas around the Parish. It was noted that the operational impact of Covid 19 meant areas had flourished and the member of the public wanted to see them remain and be developed.

The Committee Chair asked for comments from Committee members.

Cllr J Ballman referred to a press release documenting that an SBC officer was in receipt of funding to develop wildflower areas within Swindon, and specifically some areas within the Parish. It was confirmed that no further information regarding this had been received by the Parish Council.

The Parish Clerk confirmed he had sent communication to the SBC officers involved regarding the allocation of £80,000 and the ambition to plant on Parish land without the Parish being aware. No further progress had been made and no response had been received to date.

Cllr S Thompson confirmed no contact has been made from SBC to HBUF regarding the matter.

Cllr M Lucas asked the committee whether the Parish were looking to increase areas of wildflowers.

The Parish Clerk highlighted the potential development of a rewilding plan that was raised by Cllr J Ballman when he was Vice-chair of the Parish Council.

Cllr S Thompson remarked that some residential verges would be unsuitable for wild flowering. Cllr M Lucas agreed and commented that larger verges could accommodate wildflowers.

Cllr M Lucas asked for a proposal to continue increasing the wildflower coverage within the Parish.

Cllr J Ballman proposed that the Parish Council increase the wildflower coverage within the Parish. Seconded by Cllr j Yeowell.

A vote to place. 5 voted in favour of the proposal.

RESOLVED that the Parish Council increase the wildflower coverage within the Parish.

107 Cricklade Field – Ecology Survey

Cllr M Lucas asked whether the Committee wished to expand the ecology report to a wider area.

The Estates Manager confirmed that the quotations provided to Cllrs specifically referred to the HBUF and Southbrook Recreation Ground.

Cllr M Lucas asked whether it would be possible to revise the area and incorporate more areas within the Parish. The Estates Manager advised that doing so would be a huge undertaking and the quote was to resolve the matter as per the resolution of Council on the 5th Feb 2020. Cllr S Thompson agreed.

Cllr M Lucas asked the Committee if they were happy to proceed with the Estate Managers recommendation.

Cllr S Thompsons asked for clarification on the area to be surveyed.

The Estates Manager confirmed the survey would include all areas of the leased HBUF land as per a map provided.

The Estates Manager advised that a site-specific badger sett survey would also be carried out on Southbrook land as previously agreed by the Leisure & Amenities Committee.

The Estates Manager provided further information on the quotations.

Cllr M Lucas asked whether Idverde had been contacted for a quote. The Estates Manager confirmed they had been, and a quote was yet to be received.

Cllr M Lucas asked whether the Committee wished to wait to receive the quotation from Idverde.

Cllr S Thompson asks whether the injunction on HBUF could be removed. Cllr M Lucas confirmed that all areas were subject to survey and the injunction could only be lifted once the survey had been completed and reviewed.

It was confirmed that the survey would cover all areas within the red line of the map provided.

The Committee Chair asked how the Committee would like to proceed.

Cllr J Ballman recommend chasing Idverde for a quote.

Cllr M Lucas asked for a time frame in which a quotation from Idverde could be expected. It was agreed that a week would be sufficient time.

Cllr S Thompson proposed Idverde be asked to provide a quote for the Ecology Survey required and a week be given to allow the contractor to respond. After this time the Estates Manager is authorised to proceed with the preferred quotation/contractor. Seconded by Cllr J Ballman.

A vote took place. 4 voted in favour of the proposal.

The Estates Manager confirms he will chase Idverde for a quote and if none is received, he may proceed with one of the other quotations.

This is confirmed.

The item is carried.

RESOLVED that the Estates Manager contacts Idverde to request a quotation for a ecology survey and allows 7 days for the contractor to respond. After this time the Estates Manager proceeds with the preferred quotation/contractor.

Meeting closed at 9.14.

Signed.....

Date.....

Chair of the Leisure & Recreation Committee