

ST STEPHEN PARISH COUNCIL

Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green and Park Street



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE *LEISURE COMMITTEE* (2) HELD AT THE PARISH CENTRE, STATION ROAD BRICKET WOOD, ST.ALBANS, HERTS ON 3 NOVEMBER 2011 at 7.30 pm

Present: Cllrs Bill Pryce (Chair), Oonah Jones, John Bell, Wendy Berriman & Eileen Whittaker
In attendance: Cllr Mick Freeman,
Juliet Pienaar (Clerk), Gill Rix (Centre Manager),
Gary Field (Head Groundsman) and Matt Huddleston (Groundsman)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were accepted from Cllr Downs.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Cllr Berriman declared a prejudicial interest in item 6.5 as an employee of Digikidz, a business hirer of the Community Centre.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 JULY 2011

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be accepted as a true record.
Votes in favour: unanimous

Motion Carried

4. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No items were accepted.

5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No requests were received.

6. CENTRES

6.1 To consider feedback from the Open Meeting

The Chairman said that it had been a worthwhile meeting. Items raised at the meeting were considered.

a) General First Aid kit at centres: The Council was responsible for the provision of a first aid kit for staff and first aid was provided at public council events. As stipulated in the hire agreement, the responsibility for first aid provision was that of the hirer. The provision of a 'general' first aid kit for hirers was considered impractical to manage and the consensus was that the Council does not provide one.

b) Hearing loop in the sports hall: It had been pointed out at the meeting that a hearing loop wasn't always effective. Members agreed that the sports hall was not the appropriate environment for a loop system and therefore should not be pursued.

c) Re-adjustment of car park lighting at Greenwood Park: The lights were linked to the CCTV at the advice of the Community Safety Officer. It had been confirmed by the District Council's Principal Engineer that the energy consumption was low and that turning them off adversely affected the CCTV. It was suggested that updating the CCTV be looked at in future but that the lighting be left as it is in the meantime. When the opportunity arises the Head Groundsman will look at the possible adjustment of the light direction or a deflector to shield the light from a neighbouring property.

d) User-friendly height barrier locking system: To protect the Council's open spaces there was a need for the lock to be shrouded. The emergency services had the access code but had advised that they would cut the lock when necessary. Fitting the locking mechanism at a lower level would not facilitate access as it would be necessary to crouch down to open the lock. The security of the park would be compromised if the height barrier was left open during the day. It was agreed that the current system remain as it is.

e) Cricket nets for Greenwood Park: The Greenwood Park Cricket Club had been asked to discuss funding with the St Albans West Indies Cricket Club and jointly investigate whether grant funding was available.

f) Cricket sight screens for Park Street Recreation Ground: It was agreed that the Frogmore Cricket Club investigate funding avenues for this equipment.

g) Dogs mess at Greenwood Park: Past experience had shown that signs were ineffective at persuading dog owners to be responsible. It was agreed that a refreshing approach be taken and that the afterschool club be asked to draw posters encouraging dog owners to 'pick up' which will be erected along the cycle path and around the park. The Chairman agreed to remind park visitors through the parish newsletter and residents' association magazines.

6.2 To consider the proposed storage agreement and storage charge

Cllrs Berriman and Whittaker reported that their research indicated that in other venues where storage was offered, priority was given to daily and elderly users and charged for only when new storage was created. Both members had looked at the existing storage cages and made recommendations as to how this could be improved and where new storage could be created. They recommended that those groups utilising storage should not be charged for it and that it should be incorporated into the overall rental charges.

RESOLVED:

Motion Carried

That no charge is levied for storage areas provided to users.

Votes in favour: unanimous

It was agreed that Cllrs Berriman and Whittaker meet with the Handyman and the Centre Manager to agree the creation of new storage areas.

Cllr Whittaker agreed to review the recently adopted storage agreement to confirm whether it will be applicable for centre storage users and liaise with the Clerk before the New Year.

6.3 To progress the 'Taster session/Open Day' event

The Centre had been reserved for Saturday 11 February 2012. It was agreed that an invitation to participate in the event should be extended to all groups hiring the council's facilities to showcase their activities and attract new members.

RESOLVED:

That the Centre Manager write to all hirers inviting their involvement with a response deadline of 14 December.

That Cllrs Freeman, Whittaker, Berriman be responsible for organising the event with the Centre Manager.

6.4 To consider the recommendation regarding rubbish removal

Members considered the recommendation from the Park Street Recreation Committee that all hirers be asked to take their rubbish home and considered the current cost of waste removal. The Head Groundsman explained that the request to take rubbish home had resulted in the PSRG hirers depositing their rubbish in the park bins, which the Grounds team emptied and put in the bins at Greenwood Park. The Clerk advised that the policy adopted should be consistent across all the Council's premises and pointed out that the rubbish generated from PSRG still cost the same to remove but with the additional cost of transporting it. The Frogmore Cricket Club had expressed the view that rubbish removal should be part of the hire service. The Centre Manager explained that hirers were currently allowed no more than two bags of rubbish.

RESOLVED:

Motion Carried

That the Council will remove two bagged sacks of rubbish for each hirer and that any amount exceeding this will be the responsibility of the hirer to take home. Any hirer that fails to comply will have their hire agreement reviewed and terminated. That this resolution be referred back to the Park Street Recreation Committee to re-consider its decision.

Votes in favour: unanimous

Cllr Berriman withdrew from the meeting.

6.5 To set the hire rates for 2012

Members read the Clerk's report which outlined the increments applied in preceding years. Practice had been to apply an annual increment based on the current Retail Price Index (RPI), however since 2010 the regular user rates had been frozen whilst the function rates had been steadily increased. The current RPI was 5.6%. The Chairman said that, in his opinion, the Parish did not charge enough for the hire of its premises, particularly for business groups. Members were of the general view that the Council could not continue to absorb inflationary costs of providing the service. The Centre Manager pointed that in recent months the Centres had lost 5 groups whilst several others had reduced their hours, leading to her concern that hire would continue to decline if the rates were set too high. She recommended that a 2.5% increase be applied to all hire rates. It was noted that the peak times at other venues varied and suggested that these variances be looked at more closely.

RESOLVED:

Motion Carried

That the hire rates be increased by 2.5% with the proviso that the peak times and other matters be looked at more closely.

That Cllrs Pryce, Freeman and Whittaker review the hire rates.

Votes in favour: unanimous

Cllr Berriman re-joined the meeting.

6.6 To review the discounted rates process

Members referred to the proposals. The Clerk added that the Leisure Committee should be responsible for approving discounted applications and not the Main Council.

RESOLVED:

That Cllrs Pryce, Freeman and Whittaker consider the proposals and make a recommendation to Main Council.

7. PARKS & AMENITIES

7.1 To set the 2012 cricket hire rates

Members agreed that the increment applied should be consistent with that set for the football rates.

RESOLVED:

Motion Carried

That the cricket rates be increased 10% at both sites.

Votes in favour: unanimous

7.2 To review the Tennis Club rental changes

Members referred to the agenda report which set out the increment as per the extant agreement. The Club had provided times when the public court would not be available and was content to retain the current Public Court and Kids Zone public hire fees.

RESOLVED:

Motion Carried

That the rental be increased in line with the agreement by £237 pa.

Votes in favour: unanimous

It was suggested that the Club be asked to erect a booking information notice at eye level on the courts available for public hire and that alongside this, the club display the times when the courts are not available.

7.3 To consider the Woodbury Field boundary proposals

Members considered an additional public entrance to the park and concluded that the most suitable location would be where an informal access had been created. With regard to the boundary it was noted that the Bricket Wood Residents' Association would like a wire fence erected along the perimeter of West Riding. It was agreed that, having removed the scrub at the request of the Community Police to improve visibility into the park, the planting of a new hedge would be a step backwards. It was pointed out that if just one boundary were fenced it would have to be made clear to users that the other boundaries were unfenced as public perception would be that they were. A fence, if erected, would have to be installed within the park boundary. It was noted that a low fence

would not improve the safety of users, which had improved with the removal of the scrub. A Member said that a fence blocking the existing informal entrances would be damaged and suggested that a bridge be installed at the most popular informal entrance which was more or less midway along the West Riding boundary. Another Member agreed, adding that following installation the need for a fence and footpath be monitored and subject to a review after 6 months.

RESOLVED: **Motion Carried**
That a bridge be installed on the natural crossing point and that it be monitored and reviewed after 6 months.
Votes in favour: unanimous

It was agreed that a budget be set aside to enable the project next year.

Cllr Berriman retired from the meeting.

7.4 To consider solutions to the multi-use games area (MUGA) surround, Woodbury Field

Members considered the recommendation to reduce the cost and time spent on replacing the wooden sleepers. The Head Groundsman pointed out that the recent vandalism had been possible because the timber was rotting. The life-expectancy of new wooden sleepers was roughly 5 years.

RESOLVED: **Motion Carried**
That the wooden sleepers be removed and the boundary landscaped as proposed and that sufficient budget be set aside to complete this work in the next financial year.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.5 To consider directional signage within Greenwood Park

Members considered the request from a resident that the public toilets be sign-posted from the children's play area.

RESOLVED: **Motion Carried**
That a suitable sign be purchased and attached to the playground sign.
Votes in favour: unanimous

7.6 To consider what is needed to obtain maximum benefit from locally sourced wood

Members considered the Head Groundsman's recommendation that a suitable sawmill be purchased to enable the Oak extracted from Blackgreen Wood to be cut in-house. It was explained that a chain saw could only cross-cut along the grain. The circular saw presently in use was restricted to a cut depth of 2.5 inches. A 5 inch cut was the deepest achievable from new equipment without the need to convert to 3 phase power in the barn. The Chairman of the Trees & Woodlands Committee confirmed that the annual management programme for Blackgreen Wood involved the felling of 10 Oaks each year and that there would be sufficient wood to justify the investment.

RESOLVED: **Motion Carried**
That suitable equipment be purchased next financial year.
Votes in favour: unanimous

8. TO SET KEY AIMS & OBJECTIVES 2012/13

Members considered the committee's future plans.

Just before 10pm the guillotine procedure was invoked.

RESOLVED: **Motion Carried**
That the meeting continue until 10.10pm
Votes in favour: unanimous

RESOLVED:

Motion Carried

A £20k budget be set aside to achieve the following key aims in 2012/13: -

Mayflower Road—install a 'Bloqx 1' (£10k)

North Close—design and install 'natural activities' (£5k)

Woodbury Field—formalise the unofficial entrance with a bridge (£2k)

Woodbury Field—re-design boundary profile of MUGA (£3k)

Park Street Recreation Ground—apply to Sport England for 100% grant-funded MUGA

Votes in favour: unanimous

9. SPORT ENGLAND GRANT

It was agreed under item 8 that an application be made toward a MUGA for Park Street Recreation Ground.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 10.10 pm.

If you require this document in an alternative format please contact the Parish Office to discuss your requirements.

The Parish Office may be contacted by telephone, email, fax or post.

Telephone: 01923 681443

Fax: 01923 681338

Email: ststephenparish@btclick.com

Post: St Stephen Parish Council, The Parish Centre, Station Road,
Bricket Wood, St Albans, Herts, AL2 3JP.

NOTE: These minutes are to be considered as 'draft' until the Council has resolved to approve them.