

WARBOYS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Leisure Areas Committee** held on 21st March 2016 at the Parish Centre.

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs M P Bucknell, Chairman

Councillors Mrs J M Cole, Ms L A Gifford, Mrs M H Harlock, R A Payne, P S Potts, G C M Willis, Dr S C Withams and Mrs A R Wyatt.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors J A Parker, J C Price and Mrs J E Tavener.

09/15 MINUTES

Upon being moved by Councillor Potts and seconded by Councillor Dr Withams, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26th October 2015 were signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

10/15 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No interests were raised by Members in respect of items appearing on the agenda for the meeting.

11/15 MATTERS ARISING

The Committee considered the following matters arising from their meeting held on 26th October 2015:-

(a) The Weir

Further to Minute Nos. 06/15(b), Councillor Willis reported that the ponds at the Great Fen where he worked voluntarily were dredged using a suction method and he undertook to supply the Clerk with the name of the company that undertook the work.

(b) Feast Week – Band Concert

Arising from Minute No. 07/15, Members' attention was drawn to the fact that the White Hart public house had been closed for some weeks. If it was not re-opened before Feast Week, the Clerk pointed out that an alternative location would be required for the band concert. Under the circumstances, Councillor Potts offered to ask the Royal Oak public house if they were prepared to host the Feast Week band concert on 24th July.

12/15 MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

With the aid of a safety inspection report that had been carried out by Wicksteed Leisure Ltd (copies of which had been circulated to Members), the Committee considered the maintenance requirements of the land within their remit as follows:-

(a) Adams Lyons Playground

The inspection report had drawn attention to a number of low and medium risks that required attention, including low sand and bark levels, removal of rotten posts in the step post cluster and repair of the safety surface and the need for loose fixings to be secured. The Clerk reported that the sand level in the horse spring mobile had subsequently topped up and that the supply of additional play bark had been delayed by the soft ground conditions for the delivery vehicle. The loose fixings on the fitness equipment would be referred to the suppliers as the equipment had been installed less than a year previously.

The Chairman advised that she had inspected the playground herself and had identified further measures that required attention. She circulated photographs that she had taken at the playground. The Chairman drew attention to the need for further sand in the horse spring mobile; for the bark in the aerial runway to be raked to the centre of the runway pending the delivery of additional supplies; for the removal of a piece of loose concrete under the conifer hedge on the northern boundary and for the cleaning of graffiti on the entrance sign. She remarked on the poor appearance of the raised flower beds and on the amount of bird droppings on the swings. She also reported that the frame of the bark safety surface at the aerial runway was rotting and loose which had exposed jagged edges and screws.

The Clerk indicated that he would arrange for the issues raised to be dealt with and would arrange for a quotation for the repair of the safety surface on the step post cluster and a replacement for the bark safety surface under the slide. With regard to the bird droppings on the swing seats, the Clerk pointed out that it was impossible to prevent birds sitting on the top of the equipment frame and that while the Handymen did clean the swings as time permitted, the seats became fouled again soon after they had been cleaned.

(b) Jubilee Park

The inspection report had drawn attention to a number of low risks, in addition to which the Chairman requested that the condition of a swing seat be monitored and that action be taken to cover the concrete base of a litter bin that had been installed.

Arising from a recommendation that a sign be erected at each entrance point to the park containing relevant information, the Chairman proposed that quotations be obtained for new signs at the entrances to all of the Council's playgrounds.

The Chairman expressed concern again about bird droppings on the swing seats arising from which a number of Members offered to clean the seats in advance of the forthcoming Easter holiday weekend.

(c) Orchard Close Playground

Members noted that the report had recommended the replacement of various parts and the upgrade of a safety surface over the next 12 months.

Notwithstanding a report to the Council (Minute No. 139/15 refers) confirming that the Council's insurers had no objection to minor maintenance work being carried out by employees as long as the Council felt that they were competent to carry out the work, Councillor Willis maintained that any work to play equipment should be carried out by specialist companies to avoid any potential future claim for negligence in the case of accident. The Clerk pointed out that the work undertaken by the Handymen involved simple tasks such as tightening bolts and that the Council retained liability irrespective of who had undertaken the work.

Councillor Willis also expressed his dissatisfaction at the format and content of the safety inspection reports, suggesting that these should contain detailed estimates for all repairs. In that respect, he recommended the use of an alternative company in subsequent years. The Chairman referred to the safety inspection reports obtained by Wistow Parish Council which contained photographs of the play equipment and the repairs required and she undertook to notify the Clerk of the name of the company used.

The Chairman also drew attention to ground erosion in the playground which had exposed some of the concrete bases of the fencing.

The Clerk indicated that he would address all of the issues raised in the reports for each of the playgrounds.

RESOLVED

that an alternative company be engaged to undertake the annual safety inspections in future, the reports to contain an estimate of all repairs required.

(d) Heath Pond and Sheepwash

Members noted that no action was required in respect of the Heath Pond and Sheepwash.

(e) Pathfinder Way Open Spaces

Other than grass cutting, the Clerk reported that no action was required.

(f) The Weir

Further to Minute No. 06/15(b), both Councillors Willis and Potts suggested the use of suction dredging to increase the depth of The Weir and they undertook to supply the Clerk with details of companies of which they were aware.

Councillor Mrs Cole pointed out that while this method of dredging might be suitable for open water, it was inappropriate for an enclosed pond such as The Weir as this would result in fish and other pond life being sucked out of the water.

She referred to advice obtained from the Environment Agency in 2014 to apply Siltex regularly and not proceed with dredging. Although Siltex had only been applied on a limited number of occasions, Councillor Mrs Cole drew attention to the good quality and appearance of the water currently and she urged that Siltex be continued to be used for a few years further to enable a longer term assessment to be made of its effectiveness.

Under the circumstances, it was

RESOLVED

that consideration of any action to dredge The Weir be deferred for 12 months and the situation reviewed after that time.

(g) School Road and High Street/Woodlands Footpath

Members referred to improvement in the appearance of the footpath between High Street and Woodlands recently.

(h) War Memorial

Members noted that no action was required at the present time.

(i) Miscellaneous

The Chairman referred to the discussion at the Council meeting held on 14th March 2016 (Minute No. 206/15 refers) and requested that the Handymen paint goalposts on the interior of the tennis court fencing before Easter to encourage youngsters to play football in the tennis court itself.

The Clerk reported that he had received complaints from the hirers of the Parish Centre on both of the preceding days about the disturbance caused by youngsters in the car park and around the building. On the Saturday, the Clerk reported that he had had to collect litter in the car park and tennis court which had taken him 30 minutes and despite speaking to the youngsters that afternoon and asking them to use the litter bins provided, the situation had been as bad on the Monday morning. It had been necessary to call the Police on the Saturday after allegations about the activities being undertaken by the youngsters and the Clerk reported that he had spoken to the local Police Sergeant that morning about the problem. Under the circumstances, the Clerk strongly recommended that no action be taken to install goalposts in the tennis court which would encourage youngsters to congregate to the detriment of users of the Parish Centre, the disturbance of neighbours by noise late at night and the volume of litter that would be generated for the Handymen to clear each day.

Following discussion, it was agreed that no further action on the matter should be taken at the present time.

The Clerk drew attention to the growing workload for the Handymen as the Council provided more play equipment and assumed responsibility for additional services. Under the circumstances, the Clerk was requested to discuss the matter

with the Handymen with a view to recommending action that could be taken to alleviate the situation.

There being no further business, the meeting was declared closed.

Chairman.