

# WARBOYS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Leisure Areas Committee** held on 19th June 2023 at the Parish Centre.

## **PRESENT**

Councillors Mrs J M Cole, R J Dykstra, D W England, D R A Fabb, Ms L A Gifford, J Land, J A Parker, Dr S C Withams and Mrs A R Wyatt.

Mr M Croucher (Warboys Sports Clubs)

## **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Ms M L Morrow, Mrs C L Sproats and Mrs S J Wilcox.

## **01/23 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

Upon being moved by Councillor Dr Withams and seconded by Councillor Mrs Cole, it was

## **RESOLVED**

that Councillor J A Parker be elected Chairman of the Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

**Councillor Parker in the Chair.**

## **02/23 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

Upon being moved by Councillor Ms Gifford and seconded by Councillor Fabb, it was

## **RESOLVED**

that Councillor Mrs C L Sproats be appointed Vice Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

## **03/23 MINUTES**

Upon being moved by Councillor Dr Withams and seconded by Councillor Ms Gifford, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7th November 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **04/23 MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor England declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in Minute No. 08/23(a) and (i) (Maintenance Requirements – Adams Lyons Playground and Onyetts Field) as he

farmed adjoining land in both cases. A dispensation to speak but not vote on both matters had been granted previously by the Council.

### **05/23 MATTERS ARISING**

The Committee noted that there were no matters arising from its meeting held on 7th November 2022 that would not be dealt with under the items appearing on the agenda.

### **06/23 SPORTS PROVISION**

Mr Croucher provided an update on the sports clubs based at the Sports Field. Membership and results had been good, although there had been a gradual reduction in the number of juniors playing cricket and there was a continuing shortage of volunteers overall.

The Clerk reported that an application by the colts football club for a grant from Red Tile Wind Farm Trust towards the upgrade of their floodlights using low energy lighting had been successful. An application for planning permission for the retention of the changing rooms at the Sports Field for a further temporary period had yet to be determined after almost 12 months but Councillor England reported that he understood that this would be approved by the District Council.

Councillor Mrs Wyatt mentioned that she had read a notice on one of the notice boards in the village encouraging youngsters to join Ramsey Colts football club but was advised that these could be removed.

### **07/23 CALL FOR SITES**

The Clerk reported that the Council had responded to the District Council's Call for Sites consultation as part of the update of the Local Plan to 2036 by submitting a proposal for an extension of the Sports Field. As the field was bordered by development on three sides now, this was the only direction in which the field could be extended to provide more facilities to cater for the growing size of the village. Previous discussions with the land owner to try to acquire the land by agreement had been unsuccessful.

The Clerk advised that subsequent discussions with local plan officers had suggested that the land would only be allocated if it was achievable within the timescale of the Local Plan but it had been pointed out to them that if the land was allocated for housing in the Local Plan, this would effectively prevent the acknowledged shortage of sports provision in the village to be addressed.

### **08/23 MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS**

The Committee reviewed the maintenance requirements of the various areas within its remit with the benefit of the reports of safety inspections carried out by Playsafety Ltd. of the play equipment at Adams Lyons, Jubilee Park and Orchard Close.

A summary of the reports had been circulated by the Clerk with comments on the action taken or on which decisions were required.

The Clerk confirmed that most of the repairs that could be dealt with by the Handymen already had been attended to or would be dealt with soon.

**(a) Adams Lyons Playground**

The following issues arose from the inspection report and in the ensuing discussion.

With regard to the trimmer damage to an entrance sign, the Clerk reported that this had not recurred since the Council had changed the grass cutting contractor in 2021. When raised in the previous year's report, the Committee had no objection to the sign's removal if the damage continued as the sign acknowledged a grant approval some 13 years previously and was becoming faded. An alternative suggested by Members was plastic sheathing attached to the posts if the problem persisted.

Members were reminded that the safety inspector had drawn attention to ground erosion at the base of a number of items of equipment in the previous year's report. Quotations had been invited from several play equipment providers to install safety surfacing but a decision had been delayed as a result of the ongoing consideration of the surfacing of the mound slide. The Clerk explained that in previous years, the Handymen had filled any hollows and reseeded in the autumn. As this had only received a risk score of 7 in the safety report, Members agreed to a continuation of the infilling and seeding as opposed to safety surfacing.

Members were informed that the safety inspector had raised concerns about the roundabout (carousel) which had received a risk score of 10 because of a danger of finger entrapment where the corner sections of some of the platform boarding had worn. The roundabout had been in situ for at least 30 years but had been repaired by a former member of the Council some 10 years previously when the platforms had been replaced. As a replacement of the platforms would require the disassembly of the roundabout at substantial cost, Councillor Fabb offered to install covering plates at the platform corners to resolve the problem.

As the safety inspector had again drawn attention to the need to tighten bolts on the sand digger which were welded on, Councillor Fabb offered to examine the equipment and ascertain whether action could be taken.

With regard to the sand pit, Members were informed that Councillor Fabb had replaced the timber edging on one side and had ordered a supply of play sand to top up the sand pit and digger unit.

The safety inspector had drawn attention to vandalism resulting in the removal of one of the tubes on the musical chimes. The unit had only been installed early in 2022 following an insurance claim and the destruction of the previous chimes. The Clerk reported that the sharp edges caused by the latest vandalism had been removed by the Handymen and as the remaining tubes were intact, no further action was required.

Members noted the comments made in the report regarding the multi-unit climber and basket swing and that assurances had been received previously from the equipment suppliers that the work suggested was unnecessary.

Similarly, the inspector had pointed out that the embankment slide did not have barriers around its summit to prevent falls but Members had accepted that the unit had been in situ for 13 years without problem and had expressed the view when this had been raised in the previous year's report that the installation of barriers would create an additional hazard by increasing the potential fall height for users if they stood on the barriers.

The inspector had drawn attention to a gap in the wet pour surfacing between the embankment and the supporting sleeper wall which had been filled subsequently by the Handymen. The inspector had returned to site to meet the Clerk to discuss the sleepers installed in 2020 to replace the timber supporting wall that was rotting. The sleepers had subsequently moved slightly from the vertical but at the meeting, the inspector had been satisfied that the sleepers were stable at the moment. He had recommended that the gap at the top be monitored which was being undertaken by the Handymen.

The inspector had again recommended that the cableway fixings be dismantled to inspect the cable inside the metal tubing but the Clerk reminded Members that this had been undertaken by Caloo in 2021. The inspector had also recommended the installation of barriers on the cableway platform to prevent falls and had drawn attention to the fact that children under 36 months could climb the ramp to the platform. As the equipment had been in use for many years as installed by the suppliers and the provision of barriers would be impractical, Members agreed that no action should be taken.

The inspector had also drawn attention to the height of the cableway seat which he suggested should be shortened as it was currently too low. However, the Clerk pointed out that if the height of the seat was raised, this would encourage heavier people to use the cableway. Members agreed therefore to take no further action.

The Clerk reported on further complaints from the occupiers of the mobile homes at The Paddock about the height of the trees and bushes in the playground bordering the boundary fence. Members noted that the vegetation had been cut back severely by a firm of tree surgeons at the end of 2020 and had been cut back again by the Handymen in April of the current year.

## **RESOLVED**

that the report be received and the actions taken noted.

### **(b) Jubilee Park**

The following issues had arisen from the inspection report.

Attention was drawn to cracking in the pathway tarmac. When this had been raised previously, a local contractor had undertaken the work and the Clerk advised that he would arrange to contact him again.

The safety inspector had again drawn attention to the rubber sheaths encasing the metal chains on the basket swing which prevented an inspection of the chains themselves but Members noted that the manufacturer had advised previously that these should not be removed as they were designed to protect the chainwork.

The inspector had reported again that the opening on the multi-play unit to the fireman's pole installed in 2022 was wider than 500 mm without a guardrail but the Clerk reported that the suppliers had given an assurance that the equipment met play safety standards.

The inspector had drawn attention to the fact that one of the posts of the agility rope walk was unstable after it had been repositioned by Bellway when the company had installed a pathway too close to its previous location. Bellway had been asked repeatedly to rectify the problem without success but the Clerk reported that work to stabilise the post would be undertaken by the Handymen.

**(c) Orchard Close Playground**

The Clerk referred to the safety inspector's reference to the replacement of the pear drop and shackle on the junior swings but explained that this was an integral part of the top bar of the equipment. Members were informed that the Handymen had repaired the shackle and were monitoring the wear on the pear drop but the swings would have to be replaced when the wear became too great.

The safety inspector had also drawn attention to the condition of the safety carpet under the toddler swing which was becoming ripped. As the safety surface had originally been installed about 25 years previously when the playground had been transferred to the Council, it was agreed that a replacement safety surface should be provided to match the surfacing under the junior swing.

**(d) Heath Pond and Sheepwash**

Members were reminded that, despite enquiries with a number of external organisations, it had not been possible to identify any sources of grant to assist with the dredging of the Heath Pond and repair of the Sheepwash.

**(e) Pathfinder Way Open Spaces**

Members were reminded that a claim had been submitted to the Council earlier in the month from a resident of Pathfinder Way who had alleged that trees on the open spaces on the estate were causing subsidence cracks in his garage. The matter had been referred to the Council's insurers.

Members were also informed that complaints were received from time to time from another householder in Pathfinder Way about the size of the hedge bordering the small area of open space on the estate where the mound was situated.

**(f) School Road and High Street/Woodlands footpath**

Members drew attention to the condition of the path between Woodlands and the High Street where the vegetation was encroaching on access again. The Clerk indicated that he would arrange for the Handymen to undertake the necessary work.

**(g) War Memorial**

Members noted that no action was required, although a complaint had been received from a member of the public about the condition of the garden. The Clerk explained that as the borders had been dug by the Handymen and were awaiting the collection and planting of the summer bedding display, the garden was certainly was not untidy.

**(h) The Weir**

Councillor Mrs Cole asked if permanent signs could be erected at the Weir prohibiting fishing by anyone over the age of 16 as the laminated signs to this effect were constantly being removed.

Councillor Mrs Cole also reported that she had obtained advice from the Environment Agency about the treatment of the vegetation that was spreading in the shallow end of the pond. The Agency had advised removal of the reeds by hand in the autumn which Councillor Mrs Cole suggested she could arrange to be undertaken by volunteers without cost. Alternatively, the Agency had recommended spraying in the spring for which a licence would be required. Following discussion on the options, Members

**RESOLVED**

- (i) that an application for the necessary spraying permit be submitted to the Environment Agency in the autumn to enable the excess vegetation to be sprayed in the spring; and
- (ii) that arrangements be made to install permanent signs at The Weir prohibiting fishing for anyone over the age of 16.

**(i) Onyetts Field**

Following the recent act of vandalism to the bridge and the removal of its remains for safe keeping by Councillor England, the Clerk reported that he had been advised by the County Council that they proposed to install a piped culvert as a cheaper option and to avoid any vandalism in the future in the event of the bridge being replaced. While neither was strictly necessary as the ditch was culverted close to the route of the public footpath, Members felt that the bridge provided an attractive feature and should be replaced if possible.

As a result of the recent hot, dry weather, Councillor England drew attention to the condition of the oak tree that had been planted as part of the late Queen's Green Canopy and her platinum jubilee celebrations in 2022. The Handymen had been watering the tree but Councillor England reported that he had delivered several

thousand litres of water to try to save the tree. He had also spoken with the businessman who had donated the tree and would be liaising with him further if the tree did not survive.

In response to a question, the Clerk reported that the application for a grant towards the cost of materials to repair the bank sides of the pond had been approved by Red Tile Wind Farm Trust.

Various locations had been suggested by Members over the past year for the proposed installation of a newt pond at Onyetts Field by the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, and Northamptonshire. Some members of the working party had undertaken a site visit recently and expressed the view that there would be insufficient width at the narrowest part of the land bordering the travelling showmen's field which had been the original suggestion.

Councillor England also drew attention to the dangers of entering and leaving the field from the A141 when towing a trailer and suggested that the entrance gate should be set further back into the field to enable vehicles to leave the carriageway when opening and closing the gate.

#### **RESOLVED**

- Ii) that the County Council be asked to make a contribution towards the repair of the bridge if this was arranged by the Council to secure its return to Onyetts Field;
- (ii) that the actions of Councillor England and the Handymen in trying to save the late Queen's platinum jubilee oak be commended;
- (iii) that consideration of the installation of a newt pond at Onyetts Field be deferred; and
- (iv) that an offer by Councillors England and Fabb to extend the access way into the field for long vehicles be accepted and they be authorised to undertake the work.

#### **(j) Miscellaneous**

No further issues were raised.

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

**Chairman.**