

AMENITIES & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Amenities & Leisure Committee held in the Council Chamber at the Council Offices, Radstock Lane, Earley, Reading on Wednesday 2nd September 2015 at 7.45pm.

Present

Chairman – Councillor Mrs L Chambers

Councillors Miss L K Blumenthal, Dr N Brock, T Chambers, D Chopping, Ms M De Jong, Mrs S Matthews and Miss J Rance.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Ms P Dunn (Personal Commitment).

21. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1st July 2015 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

22. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The Committee noted details of the financial transactions for this Committee for the three months to 30th June 2015, a copy of which is attached to these Minutes for the information of Members.

23. LAUREL PARK MATTERS

The Town Clerk advised Members that, in 2009, at the meetings of this Committee held on 1st July and 2nd September, various recommendations were made, which were subsequently adopted by the Full Council, to enter into meaningful discussion with Wokingham Borough Council over management of all the Borough Council owned recreational land located within the Parish of Earley and in the future.

Subsequently, at a meeting of the Committee held on 26th October 2011, he was authorised to proceed with the lease of Laurel Park Pavilion and this was completed in January 2012 and the Pavilion reopened from the beginning of the 2012/13 football season. At the time, the Town Council was not in a financial position to take on the maintenance of the entire park, to include the football pitches, due to the level of expenditure required on capital items. Since then, under the capital programme, new machinery, to include tractors and mowers, had been obtained for Sol Joel Park and these were also suitable for the maintenance of Laurel Park. Therefore, for the foreseeable future, there would be no need for the Council to engage on substantial capital expenditure for park maintenance equipment.

With no planned capital expenditure required, he had revisited projected revenue budget figures and confirmed that the estimates were not substantially different from the level reported in 2009. Estimates now being prepared were partially based upon the history of actual expenditure on the Pavilion since the Town Council took over the management of the building and, also, for the rest of the park on actuals that had been incurred in the maintenance of Sol Joel Park. Income figures for pavilion hire and pitch hire were based upon actuals, because the Town Council had been collecting the pitch hire payments on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council while the latter was still responsible for the park itself.

Estimated budget figures were provided at the meeting for the benefit of Members, who were requested to consider whether the Town Council should take over the responsibility for Laurel Park from Wokingham Borough Council with a target date of 1st April 2016. The Committee was reminded that the pavilion was being maintained by Earley Town Council but the contract for

grass cutting and maintenance was dealt with by Wokingham Borough Council and that contract would terminate at the end of the financial year.

The Town Clerk added that there were issues with regard to the car park and the state of the pitches and he had put in a Section 106 bid for pitch improvements.

In response to concern from a Member with regard to the figures, the Town Clerk suggested that he could bid for transitional funding from Wokingham Borough Council.

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of a confidential report from the Town Clerk.

24. PROPOSAL FOR A COMMUNITY ORCHARD

Members were reminded that, at Minute 14 of the last meeting of this Committee, it was reported that there was an Officers' site meeting, scheduled for 10th June, to look at possible sites for a second orchard in Earley.

The Town Clerk advised that he, together with the Deputy Town Clerk and Senior Park Ranger, had visited the possible sites and the preferred one was in Laurel Park alongside the laurel hedge that ran from the car park to Rushey Way. Other possible sites had been viewed but some were also on Wokingham Borough Council land and, accordingly, there would be a need to enter into discussion with the Borough Council Officers to move towards a decision.

Officers had met with representatives from the Community Orchard Group who had agreed to the site and had submitted a draft planting plan.

It was noted that Wokingham Borough Council was being approached for consent to plant in the preferred location with the intention that planting would take place in early spring 2016.

25. COMMUNITY & YOUTH CENTRES

25.1 Earley Radstock Social Club

Members were reminded that, at Minute 15.1 of the last meeting of this Committee, consideration was given to jointly promoting the facilities of the Radstock Lane Community Centre and the Earley Radstock Social Club.

The Town Clerk had held a meeting with Officers from the Social Club on 6th July at which some plans were discussed to hold an opening event and the Social Club had suggested it be held on a Sunday afternoon although the Town Council Officers were not keen because of possible disturbance to residents and they suggested that the event be held at the end of November/beginning of December on a Saturday to include a craft fair and that the Social Club be invited to be included. The Town Clerk added that the Club was up to date with its rent and he was of the opinion that there would be mileage in the Town Council supporting it.

The Committee was of the opinion that it would be a good idea and agreed that the Town Council support the Club provided that the Club was happy to be supported. In response to a question from a Member as to who would take the lead, the Town Clerk advised that it would be him together with the Facilities Manager. In answer to a Member's concern that there would be a need to check that the date of the event would not conflict with anything that Radstock School had organised, the Town Clerk advised that he would speak with the School.

25.2 Community & Youth Centre Leases

Further to Minute 15.2 of the last meeting of this Committee, the Town Clerk advised that there was one item relating to insurance still to be resolved before the lease for Centrepont could be finalised.

26. MAYS LANE CEMETERY

The Town Clerk reported that, because of the volume of burials at the Cemetery, it would be necessary to have an additional spine laid in the current financial year. This would entail an estimated cost of £1,000 with the work being carried out by Earley Town Council staff.

Accordingly, the Committee was requested to consider asking the Policy & Resources Committee to agree an addition to the Mays Lane Cemetery budget to cover the cost of the work.

RESOLVED that the request be approved.

27. REPLACEMENT EXCAVATOR

Members were reminded that, in November 2014, the Tractor Shed at Mays Lane Cemetery had suffered a break-in and a number of items of equipment had been taken. The Town Council had received an insurance settlement for these items, the majority of which had now been replaced. However, the excavator (digger) settlement was for £5,650 being the market value of the stolen item and this was insufficient to purchase a replacement in good enough condition to last for a number of years.

The Town Council had been able to continue necessary work through the hire of a machine but this brought a cost and an excavator was not always available when it was needed.

The Committee was, therefore, asked to consider a request to the Policy & Resources Committee for an additional budget item of £7,000 to enable the Town Council to purchase a newer machine. Members noted that the estimated cost of a brand new machine would be in the region of £16,300. The Amenities & Leisure Manager advised that the cost of hiring a digger was £300 per week and any new machine would have a 3 year warranty and be fitted with immobilizer equipment.

RESOLVED that subject to the agreement of the Chairman of this Committee, Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee, the Town Mayor and Councillor Jorgensen, a new excavator be purchased.

28. MAIDEN ERLEGH LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

28.1 Green Fair

The Committee noted that the annual Green Fair, organised by the Town Council, was again very successful with 58 plots occupied. Attendance was very good on the day with positive feedback received from stallholders and the public.

28.2 Maiden Erlegh Lake

The Town Clerk reported that, on 17th August, green algae was discovered in the lake. This had, unfortunately, led to the closure of the lake to fishing and notices had been posted advising the public about the problem and, also, that they should prevent their dogs from swimming in the lake.

The reason for the closure was to preserve the fishing stock and to allow the lake to recover. This could only be achieved through increased oxygen in the water and would be solely dependent on the weather conditions. The Environment Agency had been informed and its staff were carrying

out regular tests of the water, the last one being on Thursday 27th August which, unfortunately, did not pass as there needed to be two clear tests before the lake could be re-opened.

The Amenities & Leisure Manager advised that other local lakes had suffered from the same problem and the Senior Park Ranger added that there needed to be rain and much colder weather conditions in order to clear the algae from the water.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that the two aforementioned members of staff had done everything that they could to clear the algae and had been out in all weathers. He added that the Environment Agency had been very good and dealt with the problem quickly.

29. REDHATCH COPSE

The Committee noted that a site meeting had taken place on 8th July, attended by contractors working on behalf of the developers, the Deputy Town Clerk, the Senior Park Ranger and Andy Glencross from Wokingham Borough Council. The meeting was particularly difficult because of the amount of nettles and brambles in the Copse but it had been possible to mark a number of invasive species of trees for felling, decide on where the main new planting would take place, mark out the line for the front perimeter fence, decide on the two access points into the Copse and mark out an indicative route for the main path network.

The developer's contractors had subsequently confirmed the work required and the Deputy Town Clerk was now chasing the contractors to obtain a start date for the work, to try to ensure that the previously produced schedule of works was adhered to and to achieve a handover of the Copse to the Town Council by the end of this year.

30. FINANCIAL REVIEW

30.1 Community & Youth Centres

The Committee was advised that this item formed part of the ongoing review of amenities as previously agreed by the Committee.

Members were referred to the relevant sections of the detailed breakdown of performance contained in the full budget statement for all service areas referred to at Minute 22 of these Minutes.

The budgeted overall deficit in 2014/15 had turned into an actual surplus due to better than expected income figures and a significant underspend at the Radstock Lane Community Centre.

The income and expenditure for the Centres were as follows:

30.1.1 Radstock Lane Community Centre

	Actual 13/14	Estimate 14/15	Actual to 31/3/15	Est. 15/16
	£	£	£	£
Expenditure	52,606	57,972	49,713	56,410
Income	41,465	43,050	44,454	43,950
Surplus/Deficit	-11,141	-14,922	-5,259	-12,460

30.1.2 Maiden Place Community Centre

	Actual 13/14	Estimate 14/15	Actual to 31/3/15	Est. 15/16
	£	£	£	£
Expenditure	66,320	62,680	63,521	63,075
Income	68,509	70,060	75,954	76,739
Surplus/Deficit	2,189	7,380	12,433	13,664

30.1.3 Totals

	£	£	£	£
Overall Surplus/Deficit	-8,952	-7,542	7,174	1,204

Councillors were also asked to note that budget provision has been made for Capital Expenditure in 2015/16 to replace windows at Radstock Lane Community Centre on health and safety grounds.

31. PUBLICATIONS

The Committee noted that the following items had been received and were available for viewing in the Council Chamber:

Berkshire Youth:	News: September/October 2015
National Association of Memorial Masons:	Newsletter – July 2015

32. PRESS RELEASES

RESOLVED that the item relating to the management of Redhatch Copse and the decision to remove some trees should receive emphasis.

33. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 8.54pm.