

**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE OF BUNTINGFORD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, MANOR HOUSE, BUNTINGFORD ON 5TH SEPTEMBER 2024 AT
7:00 PM.**

Membership: Councillors S. Bull, Mrs J. Danagher M. Furness, Mrs P. Furness (Chairman), K. Harrington, P. Ricketts & D. Wallace.

Present: Councillors Mrs P. Furness, D. Wallace, M. Furness, P. Ricketts & K. Harrington (19:02)

Officers in attendance: J. Jones (Town Clerk) & A. Georgiou (Admin Assistant)

138. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies from Councillors S. Bull & Mrs J. Danagher.

139. TO RECEIVE MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

No declarations.

140. TO RECEIVE A REPORT AND UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRMAN.

The Chairman stated that the committee have been working through August and have undertaken walkabouts in the town, updates will come under relevant agenda items.

K. Harrington entered the meeting (19:02)

141. TO APPROVE AS A TRUE RECORD AND AUTHORISE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE HELD ON 4TH JULY 2024.

Following a proposal, second and a unanimous vote it was

RESOLVED

That the minutes are a true record and the Chairman was authorised to sign them.

142. ACTIONS FROM 4TH JULY 2024 MINUTES.

Old records for the Hare Street Road Wildlife Area were found, however they were not particularly useful.

The office did reply to Layston Grove regarding the proposal for a "Chatty Bench", the location is dependent on the High Street improvement works.

Proludic have been to inspect the zip line and found no issues or cause for concern. It was also noted there are safety signs on the gate to the play area, although the sign is not specific to the zip line.

No letter was written to Vistry regarding the Bovis Amenity Land as the land can be accessed for work from another section that is not still owned by the developers. It was suggested that once the new development starts, discussion can be had with the developers to acquire the small strip of land that is not already in Council ownership.

143. LAYSTON COURT GARDENS - TO DISCUSS ISSUES RELATING TO LAYSTON COURT GARDENS.

It was noted that repairs to the damaged gazebo are scheduled for tomorrow. It was also noted that further quotes to make the structure stronger are expected soon. It was stated that the gazebo is covered by the Council's insurance policy, however the damage was minor and it was not worth claiming due to the excess.

The potential for lighting on the path to the gardens was discussed at one of the committee walkabouts, however it was suggested lighting was not needed as the gardens are closed at 20:00 or dusk (whichever is earlier). The potential for using the gardens as a wedding venue was also discussed, however it was noted that it is not possible to licence the gardens, there would also be issues with security around vandalism. It was suggested that people can still have wedding photos in the gardens.

After some negotiation, East Herts District Council have indicated that they will not sell the gardens for any less than £31,000, which is much lower than the initial valuation of £50,000. It was stated that

if Buntingford Town Council (BTC) were to purchase the gardens it is significant expenditure but it is acquiring a well-used asset. It was also noted that BTC would lose the £12,000 per year maintenance contribution from East Herts, but would control all decisions on the gardens.

It was suggested that BTC have the money available and the gardens are an indisputable asset.

Following a proposal, second and a unanimous vote it was

RECOMMENDED

To Full Council that this Council purchase Layston Gardens from East Herts District Council for £31,000 to be funded from New Homes Bonus.

144. **NORFOLK ROAD - TO DISCUSS ISSUES RELATING TO THE NORFOLK ROAD PAVILION, SKATE RAMPS, MUGA AND ALL OTHER ISSUES RELATING TO NORFOLK ROAD PLAYING FIELD, INCLUDING CONSIDERATION OF QUOTATIONS FOR REPLACEMENT FLOODLIGHTS AT THE MUGA AND AGREEMENT TO A S106 APPLICATION TO FUND THE REPLACEMENT. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF EMERGENCY DECISION ON REFURBISHMENT/MAINTENANCE OF THE MUGA.**

It was noted that a personal injury claim has been made against the Council. This is being dealt with by the insurance company. The claim was acknowledged and it was noted that the issue has been rectified.

It was reported that a company had recently quoted for a replacement roller shutter on the balcony door at the pavilion, this quote has already been accepted. When visiting the site prior to starting work, the company also looked at the broken garage roller shutter. The company also noticed that the front door roller shutter is not compliant due to it not having a safety stopper. The total of all 3 quotes is £3823.16.

It was noted that accepting all quotes will leave roughly £12,000 in Pavilion reserves. It was suggested that the work should be done as it is all necessary for the safety and security of the building.

Following a proposal, second and a unanimous vote it was

RESOLVED

That this Council accept three quotes totalling £3823.16 for new roller shutters at Norfolk Road Pavilion.

It was reported that the Cricket club have requested that the Council purchase some varnish and members from the Cricket Club will enhance the benches on the playing field. The Committee were happy with the request in principle, but wanted to ensure that the Cricket Club showed proper due diligence when undertaking any work. Councillor Furness agreed to speak to the Cricket Club to discuss arrangements.

It was reported that the remedial works on the floodlights has now been completed. The quotes for new floodlights can now be considered. Two quotes have been received, one quote for 16 new floodlights and stress testing totalling £21,154 and one quote for 12 new floodlights and stress testing totalling £23,000.

It was suggested to go with the cheaper quote which included more new floodlight.

It was suggested that the work could possibly be done using S106 funding, however there was a chance that the application could be rejected. It was noted that there was significant funds in MUGA reserves to cover the cost if needed. The Committee was happy to accept the quote and put in an S106 request with a risk of the application being rejected and the money having to come out of MUGA reserves.

Following a proposal, second and a unanimous vote it was

RESOLVED

That this Council accept a quote of £21,154 from HBS for 16 new LED floodlights and stress testing of columns at the MUGA to be funded from S106 funds or MUGA reserves.

It was noted that emergency MUGA surface works are being undertaken next week.

It was reported that a safety sign has been damaged on the fence of the play area, there are no spare signs in the office. It was noted that there is still one undamaged sign on the fence on the other side of

the play area.

Councillor Wallace reported that he recently attended the launch of the Hertfordshire City Hubs and Cycling Academy for children aged 7-14. The event was very successful and because of it, a local group have indicated that they would like to start doing afterschool sessions at the pump track.

It was also noted that the cycle repair station has been installed outside the Pavilion.

145. SWCC - TO DISCUSS ISSUES RELATING TO THE SWCC GROUNDS, PITCHES AND PLAYGROUNDS INCLUDING UPDATE ON VANDALISM TO PLAYGROUND.

It was reported that the football pitches are not in a good state at the moment, this was due to problems with grass cutting earlier in the year, the grass had got so long and after the initial cut there was lots of grass left on the field, this then compacted and has created patches that have damaged the field. The damage has been treated at an extra cost. It was suggested that the Council need to keep an eye on this in the future as there is a possibility it could happen again. It was noted that the current grass cutting contract runs until 2027. It was suggested that the Council should write to the contractor explaining the situation and the issues this year.

The repair of the fire damaged play equipment has been authorized by the office. The insurance company have agreed to cover it. It will be a like for like replacement with another tunnel going through the mound.

The Buntingford Dramatic Society have requested to lay some paving slabs on the grass outside of the storage container. The Drama group are currently having to walk over grass / mud, which occasionally gets into the hall.

It was suggested that the work needs to be done properly at the cost of the Dramatic Society. The Committee agreed that it has no problem with the work in principle, but would like to know who is doing the work to ensure the correct insurance is in place.

The request for a bore hole is ongoing and being dealt with by the Council's solicitors.

146. HARE STREET ROAD PLAYING FIELD - TO DISCUSS ISSUES RELATING TO FIELD, PLAYGROUND AND WILDLIFE AREA.

Councillor Ricketts is liaising with Capel Manor College to come and maintain the wildlife area. They will be coming on Wednesdays, but there is no start date yet. The fire station have agreed to let them park on their site. Councillor Ricketts has also managed to get some aerial photos of the wildlife area.

The vehicular access issue is still being dealt with by the solicitors. There has recently been some movement with this.

147. BOVIS AMENITY LAND - TO DISCUSS ISSUES RELATING TO ALL AREAS OF THE AMENITY LAND.

The improvements to this area are tied in with the River Rib works. It was reported that the group are moving forward but it will take time. The contractors are aware of the situation with the eroding bank and are not concerned with their timescales at the moment.

148. LAYSTON CEMETERY - TO DISCUSS AND CONSIDER ANY ISSUES RELATING TO LAYSTON CEMETERY AND UPDATE ON CHURCHYARD GATES.

At one of the Committee walkabouts the potential for more trees was discussed. It was stated that this is possible but the Council will need to take advice on what type of tree should be used. It was suggested that the current trees have not yet fully established and Council should take some time before making any decisions. It was agreed that this should be monitored for the time being.

It was suggested that more daffodils can be planted on the left hand side of the path that runs down

the side of the cemetery. There would be potential for volunteers to help plant them.
The Clerk agreed to contact the current maintenance contractor to discuss the location for daffodils.

It was suggested that planting a remembrance tree could be added to the cemetery fees. This was something that could be possible, but will need more research on what type of trees would be suitable.
Councillor Harrington / Ricketts agreed to look into this.

149. HARE STREET ROAD GARDENERS ASSOCIATION - UPDATE.

It was reported that the association is working efficiently. A new Chair of the association will be appointed soon.

150. TO HIGHLIGHT ANY ISSUES OF CONCERN AROUND THE TOWN INCLUDING UPDATE ON COMMON LAND AT RIVER GREEN.

It was reported that the area thought to be common land is in fact not common land, but belongs to Highways.

Councillor Ricketts expressed his disappointment as a lot of effort had been put into the restoration project by the Town Council, but Highways will not let the Town Council do any work on the area.

There was uncertainty as to whether Highways have any plans for the area, there was also concern that if the area is just grassed over it will not last long as vehicles will just drive over it again.

It was suggested that the Council should re-look at the area in a year or so, as for now the Council have been told by Herts County Council representatives that it is Highways land and to leave it alone.

151. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM MEMBERS OF THE RIVER RIB RESTORATION GROUP.

The plans are progressing well.

152. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE S106 OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES WORKING PARTY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE WORKING PARTY.

The Buntingford Cougars application for a new portakabin has been submitted, they are under the impression that they do not need planning permission but have to complete a certificate of lawful development. East Herts also want a letter from the land owner.

It was discussed earlier but the S106 application for work on the MUGA lights can now be submitted. Work at Hare Street Road is dependent on access.

153. TO INVITE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE MEETING.

No members of the public present.

It was asked if there was any update with the youth club looking for a new facility. It was reported that they are currently looking at using the Pavilion at Norfolk Road Playing Field.

It was reported that the new Deacon at Saint Richard is keen to re-open Benson Hall for bookings.

Meeting closed 20:45

Next scheduled meeting of the Amenities Committee Thursday 3th October 2024 7.00pm.

Actions to be taken

M. Furness to liaise with Cricket Club regarding varnishing benches.

Office to write to grass cutting contractor.

Clerk to contact cemetery maintenance contractor to discuss daffodils.

Councillor Harrington / Ricketts to investigate remembrance trees for cemetery.