

Lowestoft Town Council
Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee
Via Video Meeting
14:30 on 19 January 2021

MINUTES

Video meeting participants: Cllrs Sue Barnard (Chair), Bob Breakspear, Neil Coleby, Alan Green and Andy Pearce

Also participating: Shona Bendix (Clerk) and Lauren Elliott (Committee Clerk)

114. Welcome

Councillors and members of the public were reminded of the right to report and application of the video meeting protocol, and the meeting was welcomed.

115. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Jacqueline Hardie, Peter Lang, John Pitts and Alice Taylor. Cllrs Tara Carlton and Neil Coleby had not provided apologies and were absent. Cllr Pearce proposed acceptance of the apologies received; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour. Cllr Breakspear had advised he would be late.

116. Declarations of Interests and dispensations

There were none.

117. Receipt of any comments and noting that the draft minutes of the meeting on 15 December 2020 will be considered at the next appropriate meeting

The draft minutes were noted.

118. Any advance comments from the public on any matters on this agenda

There were none.

119. Progress with the development of wildflower areas at Clarkes Lane and Daffodil Walk

Cllrs Coleby and Breakspear joined the meeting 14:37

The Committee Clerk is due to be seeking quotations. Cllr Coleby will speak to her after the meeting to clarify the specification to be provided for the quotations.

120. A proposal from the Climate Emergency Committee to develop an area in Fen Park to produce mulch

This has been discussed in general terms by this Sub-Committee and other Committees and there has been support for the idea. Cllr Hardie was due to be progressing this with the Fen Park Friends. The Friends of Kensington Gardens have been keen to develop an area to produce mulch in Kensington Gardens as well. It may not be possible to develop such areas at all Town Council sites, particularly as most do not have an active Friends Group. Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to the Assets, Inclusion and Development (AID) Committee that this Sub-Committee is in support of composting or mulching areas on Town Council areas where appropriate, including to explore possible locations in Fen Park and Kensington Gardens; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

121. Review of the Town Council's Tree Policy

The Tree Policy has now been considered by several Committees. Certain elements were too prescriptive and did not allow the discretion the Council is seeking to consider individual requests on their own merit. The Clerk has made amendments and this Sub-Committee is satisfied that the wording is now suitable to allow discretion should Council wish to exercise it. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the AID Committee to adopt the Tree Policy as amended; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

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122. Information boards and/or required signage for the Town Council's parks

Cllr Coleby has put together a paper, which the Committee Clerk is using to seek quotations. It is understood some items, such as arches or gateways, were removed from Kensington Gardens some time ago, however it is unlikely that Norse would still have them in storage. It was agreed that signage is important as many visitors are unfamiliar with the names of many of the areas. This Sub-Committee previously discussed potentially renaming some of the parks and open spaces but the AID Committee did not wish to progress any changes at this stage, until the Neighbourhood Development Plan is completed. It was suggested the Council could still progress signage based on what the areas of land are more commonly known as locally, without affecting the Neighbourhood Development Plan. The different signs suggested in the document present options depending on the environment and history of each site. It was agreed this should be progressed in tandem with the five year planning for parks. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the AID Committee to adopt the park signage document as a working document, with thanks to Cllr Coleby for creating the document, and for officers to obtain indicative quotations for the different types of signs as detailed within the document; seconded by Cllr Green; all in favour.

123. Play areas:

123.1 Which play area to prioritise for refurbishment in 2021 – 2022 – Nightingale Road has recently been refurbished. An additional piece of equipment is due to be installed at Stoven Close. A project to refurbish Whitton Green is ongoing. Subject to Full Council's approval of the budget there will be an increased play area budget for the 2021 - 2022 year, of £70,000. In previous years one larger park has been selected for complete refurbishment. Should the budget allow, it may be possible to complete improvement works to one of the smaller play areas alongside this. It was suggested that Sparrows Nest could be put forward for complete refurbishment, along with the improvement work to St Margaret's Plain and Britten Road, as per the items later on the agenda. Sparrows Nest had particularly been identified following comments from members of the public. Whilst researching options for outdoor fitness equipment, an item of sensory equipment was also brought to the Council's attention, which officers will obtain a quotation for. East Suffolk Council is intending to install equipment along the seafront. Officers have been completing asset inspections and any immediate health and safety concerns are raised with Norse. The Town Council has several small parks serving a limited number of residents. Whether that justifies large expenditure is a policy decision for the Council. It was suggested that Sparrows Nest could be designated as a toddler and infant play area and equipment in line with the recently discussed Alice in Wonderland theme could be considered if the budget allows. Kensington Gardens celebrates its centenary in 2022 and previously had a statue of Peter Pan. It was suggested that an enhancement to Kensington Gardens could be considered at the same time. If improvements were to be made to St Margaret's Plain and Britten Road alongside this they would not be complete park refurbishments, but improvements to the existing facilities and possibly the additional of a single piece of equipment. Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to the AID Committee to prioritise the Sparrows Nest play area for refurbishment in 2021 – 2022, and to make improvements to the St Margaret's Plain and Britten Road play areas; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour.

123.2 Further improvements to the St Margaret's Plain play area – The mound where there used to be a slide was discussed. It is not presenting a health and safety hazard, but the Committee Clerk has sought advice on how it may be approved aesthetically. Options include covering the mound with matting or grass, removing the mound or

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14:30 on 19 January 2021

exploring options for pieces of equipment which could incorporate it. It is understood the mound is used as it is by younger children. There is a concrete path leading into the park, which, although cracked, does not present an immediate health and safety concern. Advice sought suggests that such a long path may not be required at all. It was suggested that the climbing frame could be replaced with another piece of equipment and one of the toddler swings could be replaced with a junior swing. Where there is an existing path, it was suggested that this could be made into a play feature itself, with a game painted onto it, rather than it being removed altogether. Feedback is that the park itself is well used but could be improved aesthetically. Cllr Pearce proposed that officers seek a quote for removal of the mound to enable the Council to fully consider the available options. It was further proposed that the option of replacing the mound and the climbing frame with a piece of play equipment be explored, to broaden the range of equipment on offer, which could be in the theme of a castle if this is how children currently use the mound; all Councillors voted in favour. It was suggested that, as the area was historically known as Goose Green, enquiries could be made with a sheet metal worker to create some coloured geese shapes to attach to the fence. Officers will look into this.

- 123.3 Improvements to the Britten Road play area surfacing – some areas of the surfacing need replacement. Officers have inspected the play area and it does require some improvement, including one piece of equipment which is becoming overgrown with vegetation. The Committee Clerk has obtained a quotation for replacement of the existing matting, which is torn in places. It was agreed that the toddler area within the fencing needs looking at more urgently than the other individual pieces of equipment. The quotation was displayed at the meeting, but is subject to Norse's ten percent mark-up. Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to the AID Committee to replace the surface of the toddler play area within the fencing, using available funds in the current budget, and that if funds are remaining in the 2021 – 2022 play areas budget once other proposed work has been completed, that the surface surrounding the standalone piece of equipment at Britten Road is replaced also. Cllr Coleby further proposed that a quotation be sought to remove the piece of play equipment from the vegetation; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. The quotation for the replacement surfacing has been obtained recently so should reflect current prices.
- 123.4 The provision of a path at the Stoven Close play area – A wheelchair accessible picnic bench is due to be installed at the Stoven Close play area, so the AID Committee felt it may be appropriate to provide a path to it. Cllr Butler had provided a report about accessibility to the Stoven Close play area and has noted it would be quite a considerable distance to connect a path from the picnic bench to the nearest pavement. A path has recently been laid at Gunton Woods, made from recycled road tarmac, which could be considered. Cllr Coleby proposed a recommendation to the AID Committee to explore the possibility of providing a path from the pavement at Weston Road, into the play park to the picnic benches; seconded by Cllr Pearce; all in favour. It was noted that the Committee may need to consider where the nearest dropped curb is if this is to be progressed.

124. Whether to progress a public survey on parks and open spaces

It would be difficult to progress a public survey during the current lockdown restrictions, as not everyone uses the internet. It was suggested that it may be more beneficial to progress a public survey as part of the process to decide the framework of the five year plans. A public survey is currently being run for the Town Hall and it was agreed that there should

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14:30 on 19 January 2021

not be too many public surveys running at the same time. Any public survey on parks and open spaces opened now would have to be quite generic and may provide more substantive data if feedback were being requested on actual plans, once they are formed. It was agreed that there should be a mix of open and closed questions, and users should be allowed to provide additional comments. Any personal data requested should be kept to a minimum.

125. The installation of dog litter bag dispensers at The Ness

The Council has been approached by the same company which has provided these dispensers at Kensington Gardens. The dispensers there are well used and there has been a reduction in the amount of dog litter, but there seems to be an issue with people taking the bags. The Ness is a popular area for dog walkers. The request received does not clarify whether the Town Council would be responsible for purchasing replacement bags. Cllr Breakspear also had some queries regarding the specification of the dispenser itself. Cllr Pearce proposed a recommendation to the AID Committee to approve the installation of dog litter bag dispensers at The Ness in principle, subject to the approval of the Climate Emergency Committee and further information about the specification and arrangements for replacement bags; seconded by Cllr Coleby. Officers will seek further information. Cllr Breakspear requested to be copied in to the emails.

126. Five-year plans for the following parks and priorities for 2021 – 2022, including how to progress the decision to install bins at every entrance:

126.1 Normanston Park – Thanks were offered to Cllr Coleby for his work on the plans. It was clarified that there are separate budgets available for the refurbishment of public conveniences and play areas, but the planning of projects should be co-ordinated.

A five minute comfort break was taken 16:06 and the meeting resumed 16:11

A checklist and map of the current provision of benches, bins and bicycle racks had been created and circulated. The Council has resolved that it would like bins at every entrance to each park. Normanston Park has a good provision of bins, but not at every entrance, nor at the car park. To fulfil this criteria, three more bins are provisionally required at Normanston Park. It was suggested that the St Margaret's Plain play area would benefit from an additional bin, or a larger bin to replace the current one. It was agreed to review the requirements at each area then seek a quotation for a bulk purchase.

126.2 Fen Park – There are four entrances to the park but only one has a bin relatively close by.

126.3 Kensington Gardens – There are five entrances, two of which have bins close by. An additional three bins would therefore be provisionally required.

126.4 Sparrows Nest – Of the four entrances, two have bins and two do not.

126.5 Belle Vue Park – One additional bin would provisionally be required here. Cllr Pearce proposed seeking a quotation for fourteen standard Glasdon bins; seconded by Cllr Breakspear; all in favour. Cllr Coleby offered to look at the other parks as well to establish the total number required. It was agreed to carry this item forward to the next meeting and consider other priorities. This Sub-Committee will be considering five year plans for all of the parks, rather than just those listed on today's agenda. There will be an item on February's agenda to consider five year plans for the Town Council's parks and open spaces, including priorities for 2021-2022. It was suggested that an update could be added to the website and Facebook to say that five year plans are being considered, and particularly priorities for the first year, and any feedback or comments would be welcomed.

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Meeting of the Parks and Open Spaces Sub-Committee
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127. Date of the next meeting
16 February 2021 14:30

128. Items for the next Agenda and Close
The five year plans will be the main item for consideration.
The Chair thanked those who had been viewing the livestream of the meeting. There were no confidential matters for consideration and the Chair closed the meeting 16:30.

129. Resolution to close the meeting to the public

Signed:
16 February 2021