

**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE OF BUNTINGFORD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM ON 3RD DECEMBER
2020 AT 7.00PM.**

Membership: Councillors Mrs T. Bonner (Committee Chairman), S. Bull (Deputy Committee Chairman), M.Furness, B. Lemay, D. Wallace, G. Waite (Town Mayor) & S.Bowman (Deputy Town Mayor).

Present: Cllrs B. Lemay, D. Wallace, Mrs T.Bonner, S.Bowman, M.Furness, S.Bull and G.Waite.

Also Present: Cllrs J.Ling and Mrs P.Furness.

Officer in attendance J. Jones (Town Clerk) A. Georgiou (Admin Officer)

164. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

No apologies.

165. TO RECEIVE MEMBER'S DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

S.Bull - Norfolk Road Playing Field.

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

The Chairman stated that she had nothing to report.

167. TO APPROVE AS A TRUE RECORD AND AUTHORISE THE CHAIRMAN TO SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE HELD ON 5TH NOVEMBER 2020.

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.

168. NORFOLK ROAD - TO DISCUSS ISSUES RELATING TO PAVILION, SKATE RAMPS AND ALL OTHER ISSUES RELATING TO NORFOLK ROAD PLAYING FIELD INCLUDING CONSIDERATION OF QUOTE FOR LIGHTING AT THE PAVILION.

Councillor Waite reported that lighting at the pavilion needs enhancing for security and CCTV reasons.

Following a proposal, second and a unanimous vote it was

RESOLVED

That the quotation in the sum of £780.00 plus VAT for the installation of 3 x 50w floodlights controlled via PIRS at the Norfolk Road Pavilion be accepted.

169. SWCC - TO DISCUSS ISSUES RELATING TO THE SETH WARD COMMUNITY CENTRE GROUNDS, PITCHES AND PLAYGROUNDS.

The Clerk reported that Acer Contractors had slit tined the pitches at the centre. She had not asked for the touchline to be aerated as she wanted to see if the maintenance undertaken made a difference.

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

Councillor Waite reported that he had been asked to look at the chain link fencing behind no. 58, Hare Street Road to establish ownership.

171. LAYSTON COURT GARDENS - TO DISCUSS ANY ISSUES RELATING TO LAYSTON COURT GARDENS INCLUDING QUOTES TO CLEAR COMPOST HEAP.

Quotes had been received to clear the compost area in the gardens, the quotes were for two different options. Councillors studied and discussed the quotes and agreed that the higher quote would be the favoured option as it achieved what the Committee was aiming to do.

Following a proposal, second and a unanimous vote it was

RESOLVED

That the quote from Complete Gardening Services value £780 to clear the compost area be accepted.

172. BOVIS AMENITY LAND - CONSIDERATION OF QUOTE FOR WORK TO TREES ADJACENT TO MILL CLOSE AND QUOTE TO CLEAR LAND AT THE UNAUTHORISED BMX TRACK ON LAND ADJACENT TO THE RIVER AT LUYNES RISE.

Councillor Bull stated that he couldn't see any harm in the track created for BMX bikes. It was pointed out that the quote is to clear shrubbery so that the track was visible. If the hedges are opened up it may be a deterrent.

Reference was made to the quote to attend to the trees adjacent to Mill Close, which are growing close to the wall and could cause future damage.

Following a proposal, second and a unanimous vote it was

RESOLVED

That the quote for £760 from J W Salmon to attend to the trees adjacent to Mill Close and £310 from Complete Gardening Service to clear the shrubbery to open up the unauthorised BMX area be accepted.

173. TO HIGHLIGHT ANY ISSUES OF CONCERN AROUND THE TOWN INCLUDING PUBLIC TOILETS IN THE BOWLING GREEN LANE CAR PARK.

Councillors Ling and Mrs Furness had asked the Amenities Committee to discuss the condition of the public toilets in Bowling Green Lane.

Councillor Bull felt that the toilets were clean but had an unpleasant odour. Councillor Ling had submitted a report (attached). Comments included the toilets need complete refurbishment, it will be costly to attend to the drainage, dirt is ingrained and normal cleaning will not be sufficient, toilets are especially needed for older residents and when there is a town event. It was suggested that if EHDC could refurbish the toilets, the Town Council could take them over and charge to use them and hire a cleaner to clean them once a day.

Following a proposal, second and a unanimous vote it was agreed to ask the EHDC representative to meet with Councillors on site to discuss the issue further.

174. REPORT ON CHURCHYARD AND NEW CEMETERY.

Councillor Waite reported that the churchyard is looking tidy. The vast majority of the planting has been undertaken at the cemetery and we are now in a position to remove the Harras fencing at the cemetery entrance and possibly accept interments. Volunteers are needed for this coming Sunday to plant bulbs at the cemetery. A quote has been received to create the family cremated remains plots and the obelisk will be installed in January. A noticeboard and interpretation board are needed.

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

Councillor Lemay reported that a date has been agreed to undertake a river walk with the surveyors.

176. CONSIDERATION OF 2021/2022 BUDGET.

No changes at the moment, the decision regarding future garden maintenance could affect the budget. Tax Base figure not yet received.

177. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE S106 OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES WORKING PARTY.

Councillor Wallace reported that the first meeting has been held and there is an aspiration for a 4G football pitch. Freman College are already looking at a 3G facility and it's intended to meet with Freman College representatives to discuss the possibility of upgrading the proposed 3G facility to 4G. There is another meeting of the Working Party later in the month where future direction can be decided. Other things discussed had been a pump track and possible change of the MUGA to tennis only, depending on the discussions on the 4G pitch.

It was reported that the meeting with Freman College had been held and the FA are still keen for a 3G/4G facility with changing rooms, floodlights and a mini stand. If the Town Council joins in with this venture then a Service Level Agreement would have to be in place.

178. FURTHER DISCUSSION ON FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR GARDEN MAINTENANCE.

It was agreed that the Clerk will take the gardening work to tender following which comparisons can be made to the most suitable arrangement.

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

Councillor Bull asked for a progress report on rubbish in the hedge on Footpath 36. The Clerk agreed to chase this up with Rights of Way.

The Chairman wished everyone a merry Christmas.

Meeting closed 8.30pm.

Next scheduled meeting of the Amenities Committee Thursday 7th January 2021

The Public Toilets in the Bowling Green Lane Car Park

The matter was first raised by Cllr Ling at the 30th July Full Council meeting, when it was noted that the toilets at Bowling Green Lane were not cleaned to standard.

On 4th August Cllr Mrs Furness sent an email to members of the Resources Committee in which she stated that she and her husband went into the public toilets: the Ladies were clean but tired: toilet seats needing replacement and the washbasin surrounds very dated. However, they were not offensive. In contrast, the Gents were awful: smelly, stained and unpleasant- even though they may have been cleaned the effort is lost given the poor state generally.

She asked who is responsible for renewing and renovating these facilities: EH or BTC?

The Town Clerk, responded that the toilets are owned and cleaned by EHDC. The street cleaner is supposed to clean them every day, but they are long overdue a refurbishment. They are one of only two toilet blocks that EHDC now operate and it's unlikely they will spend any money on them, especially with the threat of unitary hanging over them. She indicated that the issue can be reported via the EHDC web site.

Cllr's Mrs Furness, Ling and Lemay all complained to the EHDC. Typically, the complaints said:

“The EHDC public toilets at the Eastern end of the Car Park in Buntingford are in a sorry state and in desperate need of refurbishment and upgrade. Structurally they are fine, but they are very unhygienic. Although they need regular cleaning, more importantly, they need a complete internal refurbishment. Even when they have been cleaned, the poor state of the porcelain, china, lavatory bowls, urinals, pipes, drains, walls, and associated equipment is such that they are impossible to keep acceptably clean. The Gentlemen's toilets are particularly in a bad state and smell appallingly. I believe the EHDC should look into this urgently and work closely with Buntingford Town Council to resolve this very unhealthy problem.”

By 30th August, the 3 Town councillors had received courteous immediate responses to their complaints via the EHDC web-site. District Councillors Jeff Jones and Stan Bull, both agreed to follow this up and escalate it.

The following was received by Cllr Ling, on 7th September:

Dear Mr Ling

I've been passed the correspondence, via Cllr McAndrew, regarding the cleanliness and general condition of the Buntingford toilets. I believe the original complaint may have gone to property services who are responsible for the building.

Officers from both my team and the property services team have been out to inspect the toilets and consider the general condition satisfactory as the facility is fully functioning. We have spoken to the cleaning operative about the required standards and hope that this will ensure the general cleaning standard is maintained to a satisfactory standard going forward. Officers have also identified areas which require additional attention for cleaning and we are exploring options for a 'deep clean' to tackle some of the ingrained staining and limescale to improve the general look of the facility particularly in the vicinity of the men's urinal.

As you may know the facility was redecorated last year and we have no current plans for a full refurbishment. However once the deep clean is complete we will work with property services to identify any other areas which may require a spend for improvement.

Regards

Chloe Hipwood

Shared Service Manager - Waste & Recycling

East and North Hertfordshire District Councils

North Hertfordshire District Council
Buntingford Depot

There seems to be little knowledge, and no one seems to be aware of last year's "re-decoration". Maybe it was only a palliative activity!

Nevertheless, the DEEP CLEANING promised was honoured later in September, but within a few weeks it was as bad as it had been.

A complete refurbishment is required.

via Zoom. 7pm.