

DRAFT MINUTES of the Shurnhold Fields Recreation Development working party held on Thursday 27th June 2019 2019 at Melksham Town Hall, Market Place, Melksham at 7.00pm.

Present:

Cllr Richard Wood	Melksham Without Parish Council
Cllr Adrienne Westbrook	Melksham Town Council
Cllr Sue Brown	Melksham Town Council
Cllr Pat Aves <i>from 7.20pm</i>)	Melksham Town Council

Two members of the “Friends of Shurnhold Fields” were in attendance as observers:
Roy Dobson, Chair
Andy Newman

Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk) Melksham Without Parish Council
Lorraine McRandle (Acting Deputy Town Clerk) Melksham Town Council

54. Chair of Meeting: *Resolved:* *Cllr. Richard Wood took the chair of the working party.*

55. Apologies: Apologies were received from Cllr. John Glover and Cllr Paul Carter from MWPC. Apologies were received from Cllr Terri Welch from MTC and Cllr Adrienne Westbrook attended the meeting as substitute.

56. Terms of Reference: The Terms of Reference for the Working Group were noted, as there were some new members.

57. Minutes of the last meeting, held Wednesday 17th April, 2019: *Resolved:* *The minutes were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.*

58. Update on Actions from last meeting, 17th April, 2019:

48a) Inspection Regime: TS confirmed that a weekly inspection schedule had been drawn up and that the two caretakers from each council were taking in turns. No invoices had yet been produced by the Town Council to ensure their cost was covered from the maintenance fund held by MWPC.

48b) Grasscutting Regime: TS confirmed that the cut had been carried out by the MWPC contractor at a cost of £395 from the maintenance fund. She had met Roy Dobson, Cllr Paul Carter and the contractor on site 30th April to agree the scope of works and discuss other works such as concreting in the noticeboard, bin etc.

Roy Dobson explained that he has been cutting some wide footpath areas in the grass, and has also mowed some of the blackthorn roots to keep them under control. Some had been left as undergrowth for wildlife habitat, especially as it allowed small animals to shelter/hide from the many dogs exercised on the fields.

48c) Bin emptying: TS explained that the bins were being ordered as part of a wider order by MWPC the following week. It was agreed that one bin was to be installed as you come through the gate, on the left-hand side, alongside the noticeboards and

doggy bag dispenser to be put in the same place; and the other by the start of the Right of Way.

Cllr Pat Aves joined the meeting at 7.20pm.

48e) Working funds for FOSF: TS confirmed that £250 had been transferred from the maintenance contribution fund to the bank account of FOSF. In addition, petrol expenses incurred by RD for grass cutting were being reimbursed to RD on the production of receipts.

50) Highways funding for Dunch Lane: RD explained that work needed to be done to improve the visibility splay at the entrance as it was impossible to turn left in a vehicle, you need to turn right and then turn around. There would be a requirement to remove the beech hedge due to the concealed entrance. TS explained that there was also an issue raised by a resident from the new development, that a hedge on the other side of Dunch Lane from the entrance blocked visibility of children walking to and from the new play area; and would resend to the Town Council officers.

52) Next steps – ditch clearance: TS confirmed that she had discussed ditch clearance with Danny Everett, Wiltshire Council's Principal Drainage Engineer and they did not want ditches to be cleared at this stage, until preventative works had been undertaken upstream. This has been passed on at the time to the FOSF.

59. Update on planning permission for car park and discharge of existing planning condition: The following update from the Planning Officer had been received: *"As far as I can tell, a car park was proposed as part of the provision of playing fields in relation to the planning permission for the adjacent housing development. It was not included within the change of use to public open space application. I'm not sure that the car park can now be provided as the playing fields are now not required. However, you would be better off speaking to Kenny Green, Team Leader for the area about this. It could be argued that the provision of a car park could fall within the Parish Council's permitted development rights as "works, required for the purposes of any function exercised by them". However, we would need to see full details before coming to a conclusion on that.*

In order to lawfully implement the permission to change the use of the land to public open space, the landscaping condition would need to be discharged. The permission expires on 25th August, so you would need to submit an application to discharge the condition along with a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan. This would then need to be approved before 25th August. I'm not sure that this can be done within the tight timescale, so your best option would be to submit a new application for the change of use. The Plan could then be a condition of the new Permission and provided at a later date"

It was agreed that the group were not in a position to submit a planning application yet as the area for the car park, entrance gate etc had not been agreed and noted that Persimmon Homes had not discharged the condition as required.

ACTION: TS to contact the Countryside Officer, Ali Rasey, to seek advice about the Discharge of Condition of 15/11656/FUL Change of use from Playing Fields to Public Open Space: *"A Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) shall be prepared and submitted to the local planning authority for approval in writing within 12 months of the date*

of consent. This shall include appropriate management to increase species diversity and the eradication of Himalayan balsam. The site shall be managed and maintained in perpetuity in accordance with the measures set out in the approved details”.

ACTION: TS to check if the cost of the planning application was suitable to be funded from the maintenance contribution.

60. Update from FOSF community group: The members noted the Minutes of the last FOSF meeting held on 27th March 2019 and raised concerns that the Minutes did not make reference to the plan and proposal tabled as an agenda item that evening for an entrance gate, bund, allotment area and car park and yet a drawing had been provided by RD and Cllr Paul Carter to officers seek planning permission. The representatives of FOSF confirmed that the proposal had been discussed by the Committee, and was not provided by individuals acting independently, and they would meet or email the other members of the committee to update the draft minutes of their last meeting. The working party members, did not feel that they could discuss these future plans until they had received this confirmation, and would therefore defer until their next meeting in September. This was to ensure that public money was being spent in accordance with good practice; and would need a lot more work to be considered either as a pre-application or full application as a full set of plans would be required including a detailed layout, site layout plan, block plan, and numbers of car parking spaces etc.

It was confirmed that the MTC rep for FOSF was Cllr Pat Aves, and the MWPC rep was Cllr Paul Carter. PA requested that more notice of meetings were given in advance to ensure she would be more likely be able to attend.

61. Operational/Management Issues:

a) Grasscutting: RD was happy to continue to cut footpath areas into the field, but had stopped work due to the health and safety and insurance concerns of MWPC. The parish council were happy to cover the work of the volunteers from an insurance point of view, but it was on the agreement that the FOSF only carried out work that had been reviewed from a health and safety perspective to the general public and safe working practices for those underdoing the work; and yet that had not been done for the grasscutting tasks that were being undertaken, initially with the parish council's knowledge. Rather than making an onerous task for the volunteers undertaking this work, it had been agreed that the volunteers would confirm in writing that they had read, understood and would comply to the existing Risk Assessment produced by the MTC for their own staff undertaking this task; whilst acknowledging any specific circumstances relevant to Shurnhold Fields. With this confirmation the parish council were happy to cover the activities from an insurance perspective. RD was in receipt of this document and happy to confirm in writing in the next day or so.

The cutting of the other areas of the fields were discussed, and it was **RESOLVED:** that only one cut per year to be undertaken, in October, by the MWPC contractor at £395 excluding VAT.

b) Tree Sapling Watering: This was discussed as a request had gone straight to the MTC staff to undertake this work, without the agreement of the two councils (costs would be incurred); and was contrary to the advice from the Woodland Trust who had

provided the trees. RD had offered to water the tree saplings on a volunteer basis, but again, as was doing this by vehicle and trailer in public open space the parish council requested a risk assessment process to be undertaken.

ACTION: LMcR to provide a copy of the MTC staff's watering Risk Assessment to pass to RD as an exemplar to confirm to MWPC that they are working safely.

c) New picnic tables/benches from Rotary grant: The FOSF had applied to Melksham Rotary for funding for some outside furniture and they had replied to say that they were not in a position to award a grant at this time but had offered to fund the provision of benches/picnic tables which could be built by the Melksham Shed Club; with a provision sum of £400-£500. Whilst acknowledging the generosity of the Rotary Club, the members noted that these would be made out of wood, and not the recycled materials originally planned for these type of public open space areas for ease of maintenance, longevity and prevention of vandalism. It was agreed that rather than taking delivery of 2 benches and 2 picnic benches, that FOSF would only request 1 of each initially on a trial basis.

d) Wildflower Meadow: The FOSF had applied to MTC for a grant towards a wild flower meadow, with a plan to cut and scrape an area to the right of the field entrance for a wild flower meadow in October when the grass was cut. An indicative cost for this scrape had been obtained from the MWPC contractor, of £1,255 excl VAT, but this included the cost of create soil banks at the entrance of the field with the spoil. The town council were yet to consider the grant, and queries were raised if this could not be funded from the maintenance fund.

ACTION: TS to check if the maintenance fund could be used to buy wildflower seeds and feedback to the town council before they considered their grant applications.

ACTION: TS to check with Danny Everett, Principal Drainage Engineer that proposed wildflower area did not interfere with any future flood prevention measures.

ACTION: MTC Officer Debbie Bentley to provide details of soil testing so that it can take place to ensure the optimum conditions for a wild flower meadow; or to aid species choice.

62. Next meeting: The next meeting will be on Wednesday 18th September at 2.00pm at the Town Hall. The question of how many car park spaces to be allocated at Shurnhold Fields to be on the agenda.