

DRAFT MINUTES of the Shurnhold Fields Recreation Development working party held on Thursday 21st March 2019 2018 at Melksham Town Hall, Market Place, Melksham at 2.00pm.

Present:

Cllr Richard Wood	Melksham Without Parish Council
Cllr Paul Carter	Melksham Without Parish Council
Cllr David Pafford	Melksham Without Parish Council
Cllr Adrienne Westbrook	Melksham Town Council

Officers: Jo Eccleston (Parish Officer) Melksham Without Parish Council
Lorraine McRandle (Committee Clerk) Melksham Town Council

37. Chair of Meeting: Resolved: *Cllr. Adrienne Westbrook took the chair of the working party.*

38. Apologies: Apologies were received from Cllr. John Glover; Cllr. David Pafford was his substitute, and Teresa Strange (MWPC Clerk) who was unwell; Jo Eccleston was in attendance in her absence to take the minutes.

39. Minutes of the previous meetings, held in 2018: The previous minutes were noted and in particular Minute 01, the Terms of Reference for the Working Group.

40. Minutes of the last meeting, held Thursday 6th September, 2018: Resolved: *The minutes were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.*

41. Update on Actions from last meeting, 6th September, 2018:

a) Update on land transfer from Persimmon to Melksham Without Parish Council

(Min 27b & 33a): Cllr. Wood read out a letter from Wellers Hedleys, the Parish Council's solicitors, confirming that the land had now been transferred from Persimmons to the Parish Council. This was the commuted open space maintenance sum of £97,383.75 however there was a sum of £2,500 towards legal costs but the council's solicitors had said that it was not clear that it could be paid directly to the parish council although the solicitor felt that it was implicit that's what it was for. The MWPC Clerk had written to Wiltshire Council s106 Officer asking her to confirm that the legal fees could be paid to the parish council to cover their costs incurred. The land was not yet registered with the land registry as there are presently delays with this process, but the £40 cost of this had been included in the invoice from Wellers Hedley, which was for £940 (excl. VAT). It was agreed that if there were any future legal costs that this could be paid from the joint project funds of both Councils.

The Parish Officer advised that the MWPC Clerk had been in conversation with the Wiltshire Council S106 Officer to seek clarification over what the open space maintenance contribution could be spent on and what constituted "maintenance"; for example, if a notice board was installed so that the Friends of Shurnhold Fields volunteers could communicate with each other and list the maintenance jobs to be carried out, could this be considered as maintenance rather than capital expenditure?

However, she was not sure of the outcome of those discussions and said that she would clarify this with the Clerk.

42. Update from Parish & Town Council Representatives on “Friends of Shurnhold Fields” Community Group: Cllr. Carter, as the MWPC representative on this Group, gave the following update and Group’s future aspirations as follows:

Work Carried out to Date:

- Some of the WWI Commemorative trees planted in November had started to sprout and to show signs of growth.
- Volunteers from the Group had cut back some of the overgrown hedge and brambles by the pathway and entrance gate.

Future Works:

- The Group wish to clear out the ditches around the two sides of the field.
- The Group also wish to move the entrance gate back into the field to create space for vehicles to pull off of the road whilst they are then opening the gate. It was noted that this may require planning permission, as may the laying of any scalplings to create a car park.
- With regard to the attenuation pond, the Group wished to understand the timeframes for this work which were being undertaken in liaison with the Environment Agency.
- Cllr. Carter had been offered the opportunity to buy a second hand rotovator and strimmer for £50, and asked whether the funds would be available for this and if this was acceptable. He asked that he could have an answer before the next “Friends” meeting on 27th March.
- The Group would like to regularly cut the grass on the public Right of Way and around the perimeter to create a walkway, but would like a contractor or the Town Council caretakers to cut the main field 2 or 3 times a year.
- There were concerns amongst some of the Group that enthusiasm for the project was waning, and they wished to progress the works to keep up the momentum and retain the volunteers.

ACTION: The Parish Officer said that she would seek advice from the MWPC Clerk re the purchase of the second hand rotovator and strimmer.

ACTION: The Parish Officer to email the Wiltshire Council Principal Drainage Engineer to confirm that any ditch clearance would not compromise the Field.

43. Future Operational and Management Schedule for the Fields:

a) Inspection Regime: A discussion took place with regard to the regular inspection of this land by a member of staff from one of the councils. It was queried whether volunteers could undertake this role, but it was felt that this should be a member of staff from one of the councils as they already both undertake inspections of their play areas and trees. There needed to be a definite regime and clear understanding of who would undertake this.

ACTION: Both councils to discuss this with their respective caretakers to identify their capacity to carry out this work.

b) Grass Cutting Regime: Cllr. Carter stated that he believed that the Friends Group would like to regularly cut the grass themselves for the footpaths, but would prefer that

a contractor cut the main field, 2 or 3 times a year, or whatever the contractor considered was appropriate. It was noted that due to the length of the grass on the field that this was beyond the capability of the Town Council mowers and that a contractor with a large-scale mower was required. The Parish Officer advised that following a phone conversation with one of the Friends Group, she had been led to believe that a ride on mower and strimmer had already been purchased second hand for this purpose. It was felt that large expenditure items like this must be considered through the Shurnhold Fields Working Party, and that it could make the process of reimbursement of such expenditure difficult.

ACTION: Cllr. Carter to ask the Friends Group what grass cutting regime/scheme they wished to see so that quotes for the larger cut of the Fields could be sought from contractors.

ACTION: Cllr. Carter to advise the Friends Group members that any large expenditure on items should be made in liaison with the Working Party.

c) Future Bin Emptying and Disposal of Waste: It was considered that two large bins were required; one near the entrance to the fields and the other on the opposite side of the field. It was felt that the cost of the provision of the two bins should be split between the two councils.

ACTION: The Town Council to investigate whether their caretakers can add the bin emptying to their regime when emptying the bin at the Dunch Lane play area.

ACTION: Officers from both councils to provide costings and images of the bins installed in their parishes for review and consideration by the Friends Group.

d) Insurance Cover: It was noted that the public liability for both fields was currently under the Parish Council's insurance cover. Members were happy for this to continue. Cllr. Westbrook queried the advice from the previous Town Locum Clerk that the Tidy Town Insurance Policy did not cover other volunteers; she had set up this insurance policy with Cllr. Jon Hubbard, and was sure that all voluntary community groups were covered, as this had been the initial proviso for the policy.

ACTION: The public liability for the Shurnhold Fields to continue under the Parish Council's insurance policy for the time being.

ACTION: Cllr. Westbrook to further investigate if the Tidy Town Insurance policy will cover activities being carried out by volunteers at Shurnhold Fields.

e) Working Funds for Friends of Shurnhold Fields Group: It was noted that the Friends Group needed some start-up funds. It was agreed that £250 should be given to them, jointly funded by the Town and Parish Council. Although both councils had allocated funding for this project within their respective budgets, it was felt that the Friends Group should send a letter briefly outlining what the funds will be used for, similar to the requirement for grant aid applications. It was also considered that the Friends Group should be encouraged to apply for other grants and pots of funding which are not accessible to parish and town councils. It was felt that there needed to be a clearer understanding of what was capital expenditure and what was maintenance costs, both for the Friends Group and for the two councils, in terms of where money for the project was being allocated from.

ACTION: A sum of £250 to be given to the Friends Group for start-up costs, to be jointly provided by both councils. The Friends Group to provide a short, written report on what this will be used for.

ACTION: The Working Group to encourage the Friends Group to apply for additional grant funding for the project.

ACTION: Information on what constitutes capital expenditure vs maintenance costs to be given to the Friends Group.

44. Future Plans for Project to Develop into a “Mini Country Park”: This agenda item was deferred as it was considered that the actions already identified needed to be addressed first.

45. Next meeting: The next meeting will be on Wednesday 17th April at 2.00pm at the Town Hall.

Meeting closed at 3.20pm