

**MINUTES of the Shurnhold Fields Recreation Development working party held
on Wednesday 18th September 2019 at Melksham Town Hall,
Market Place, Melksham at 2.00pm.**

Present:

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Cllr Paul Carter | Melksham Without Parish Council (MWPC) |
| Cllr Adrienne Westbrook | Melksham Town Council (MTC) (<i>as substitute</i>) |

Roy Dobson, Chairman of the "Friends of Shurnhold Fields" (FOSF) was in attendance as an observer.

Officers: Teresa Strange (Clerk) Melksham Without Parish Council
Linda Roberts (Clerk) Melksham Town Council

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

64. Apologies: Apologies were received from Cllr. John Glover and Cllr. Richard Wood from MWPC. Apologies were received from Cllr Sue Brown, Cllr Pat Aves and Lorraine McRandle from MTC and Cllr Adrienne Westbrook attended the meeting as a substitute. Phil Mason, the Secretary of the Friends of Shurnhold Fields also gave his apologies. No apologies had been heard from Cllr Terri Welch, Cllr Hayley Illman and Cllr Vanessa Fiorelli (MTC) and Cllr Kaylum House (MWPC).

65. Minutes of the last meeting, held Thursday 27th June, 2019: *Resolved:* *The minutes were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.*

66. Update on Actions from last meeting, 27th June, 2019:

48a) Inspection Regime: The two caretakers of each council were continuing to inspect on a weekly basis (one week MTC, the next week MWPC) and no issues had been raised.

48b) Grasscutting Regime: The one off grass cut had been undertaken by the contractor, and Roy Dobson (RD) was continuing to cut the grass with wide mown paths and around the perimeter following confirming in writing the day after the last meeting that he agreed that the work he was doing was in compliance with the MTC Risk Assessment for grasscutting in a public space. This therefore complied with the insurance requirements of MWPC. RD supplied fuel receipts to MWPC who reimbursed them on a regular basis from the Open Space Maintenance Contribution.

48c) Bin emptying: TS explained that the bins were being installed shortly, they were part of a wider set of works that the parish council's contractors would be undertaking and the bins, doggy poo bag dispenser and noticeboard will all be concreted in at the same time at Shurnhold Fields.

50) Highways funding for Dunch Lane: MWPC Cllr Alan Baines to remind the CATG (Community Area Transport Group) at the next meeting in October, about the £9k fund from the s106 from George Ward Gardens (14/11295/REM) for highways improvements in Dunch Lane, the two councils would like to see used for improving the visibility splay to the entrance to Shurnhold Fields. This did not have an issue

number, but was just at the bottom of the CATG action tracker, and the reminder was just to raise awareness that this was the desire of the Shurnhold Fields Working Party, in line with the car park proposals.

59) Update on planning permission for car park: A long conversation had been held with a Planning Officer, about whether a car park could be considered “permitted development by a local authority” and therefore not require planning permission. To be able to answer that question at pre-application stage (a free of charge enquiry for parish councils) the Planning Officer will need to know the proposed location, where the access would be and the proposed number of car parking spaces. Parish and Town Councils are allowed to build a “small maintenance building” under permitted development and therefore it was envisaged that a “small, modest car park” would be permitted. The MWPC Clerk had asked how many parking spaces would be considered “small and modest” and the answer was that 5 would be considered small and modest, 20 may be but would require a formal application. What did stand the group in good stead was the previous permission on the site for a car park for the rugby club, as a precedent had been set, and nothing had changed since then as the rugby club was originally part of the original housing development.

Pre-application enquiries from parish and town councils were free of charge and it was agreed that the best way forward was to put the enquiry through as a pre-app to see if it was allowed under permitted development, or needed a formal planning application.

The Friends of Shurnhold Fields had discussed a figure of 10 parking spaces which they felt was about right. TS explained that Melksham Without Parish Council had felt quite strongly at the onset of this project that a car park was required to ensure that Shurnhold Fields was accessible for all parish (and town) residents and not just for residents from the surrounding houses on foot.

Those regular visitors/residents in attendance stated that they usually only saw 2/3 cars parking outside.

ACTION: TS to submit a pre-application enquiry for a car park to the left as you come through the entrance gate, against the perimeter, for 10 parking spaces.

59) Discharge of Condition 15/11656/FUL Change of use from Playing Fields to Public Open Space: The MWPC Clerk had spoken to the Countryside Officer about the LEMP (Landscape & Ecology Management Plan) that needed to be provided and offered to send a template LEMP that the group could use as a basis for the Plan. Himalayan Balsam is non-native, but not really invasive or a public health concern like Japanese Knotweed or Giant Hogweed. The issue was that its seeds travelled down stream in watercourses, and so the best thing to do to manage it was to pull it up in the Spring (May/June) before it set seed; it was difficult to identify earlier in the year before it comes into flower. It will be an ongoing battle as it will continue to flow downstream from other sources upstream. The LEMP needed to be in place to ensure that it was controlled in terms of moving further downstream from Shurnhold Fields, and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust were embarking on a project called “Source to Sea” where they are tackling the source of the problem right down to the coast.

<https://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/source-to-sea>

RD explained that the biggest problem was that there was no access to the brook from brambles and vegetation which prevented the “Friends” access to the watercourse in the spring to clear the Himalayan Balsam. This clearing of the watercourse had not been permitted by the Principal Drainage Engineer of Wiltshire Council as part of the wider, holistic approach to flood prevention on the Southbrook catchment area. TS explained that she would like to arrange a site visit with the Principal Drainage Engineer on another topic for a later agenda item and this could be combined with this visit to see what could be done/permitted.

ACTION: TS to check with Wiltshire Council’s Principal Drainage Engineer as to whether access to the brook could be made by clearing vegetation, to enable to clearance of Himalayan Balsam in the spring, hopefully with a site visit.

ACTION: If a LEMP template is not received from Wiltshire Council’s Countryside Officer in a timely manner, then an approach to be made to Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to see if they can assist.

59) TS had checked if the cost of the planning application was suitable to be funded from the maintenance contribution and had received the response that it was not usual for this to be done. It was noted that a planning application made by a parish/town council had an automatic 50% discount, and a pre-application enquiry from them was free of charge.

61b) Tree Sapling Watering: The action for the Town Council to provide their sample Risk Assessment for watering to be supplied to the FOSF so that they can agree they are working in conformance to it, to be covered by MWPC’s insurance was still outstanding. It was noted that the Town Council water by use of a bowser with a pump and the FOSF will do with tanks and a generator and electric pump.

TS noted a recent letter in Melksham Independent News stating that 50 of the trees planted at Shurnhold Fields in commemoration of WWI had died. TS had discussed this with the Countryside Officer who confirmed that Wiltshire Council had not watered any of the WWI trees that they had planted themselves. Trees shed their leaves as a defence mechanism in dry periods and so it was premature to say that these trees were dead until the spring. TS had stated that MWPC had ordered surplus trees with their pack for Bowerhill Sports Field arriving in November, so that there were additional trees available if required as replacements for Shurnhold Fields. The advice from the Countryside Officer was that they were planted adjacent to the species thought to have died, as she noted that in 10/15 years’ time some of the trees will need to be thinned out anyway.

ACTION: Cllr Carter to advise which species and quantities of tree saplings are required as replacements so that they can be pulled out of the order for Bowerhill Sports Field to be used at Shurnhold Fields. The trees were being delivered in the two-week period ending 22nd November.

Cllr Carter had followed up with the Woodland Trust himself direct, and they had advised that tree saplings do not need watering in normal watering but did need watering in very hot weather. It was acknowledged that RD had offered to do this, but to be covered by MWPC’s insurance he needed to have provided a risk assessment,

or alternatively state that he conformed with the risk assessment to be provided by MTC.

61c) New picnic tables/benches from Rotary grant: Unfortunately, the Shed Project had not taken up the offer of the Rotary Club to build seats and picnic benches for Shurnhold Fields, with materials funded by the Rotary.

ACTION: To purchase 2 x picnic benches and 2 x seats to be funded 50/50 by MTC and MWPC. The picnic benches to be sited on the mown area adjacent to the Right of Way access by the bridge (as there will be a bin relatively close by) and the seats to be installed on either side of the perimeter of the field, as marked on a map by the FOSF. The picnic benches and seats to be of a recycled material such as the MWPC standard, and the picnic benches recently installed at the MTC Splashpad.

61d) Wildflower Meadow: The MWPC Clerk had checked if the Open Space Maintenance sum could fund wildflower meadow seeds and this was possible, and fed back to MTC before they made their grant application review; as the request for funding from FOSF had been rejected as the wildflower meadow could be funded by the Open Space Maintenance fund.

The MWPC Clerk had also checked with the Principal Drainage Engineer that the proposed wildflower area did not interfere with any future flood prevention measures and he offered to make a site visit after he returned from leave (returning 4th Oct). The MWPC Clerk had also asked the Engineer to advise on that site visit where it would be useful to use the scrape from the wildflower meadow as a bund so it did not exacerbate the flood issue, but could be used for flood prevention.

The action for MTC to provide their soil testing kit so that it can take place to ensure the optimum conditions for a wild flower meadow; or to aid species choice was still outstanding.

67. The MWPC Clerk had provided a financial report of the spend against the Open Space Maintenance Contribution for 2018/19 and for 2019/20 to date, which were noted and agreed to be an appendix of the Minutes.

68. Update from Friends of Shurnhold Fields: It was noted that no minutes of the latest FOSF meeting/s had been received by MWPC or MTC; and that MTC Cllr Aves was still not receiving notifications of when FOSF meetings were being held. Cllr Westbrook asked the MWPC Clerk to ensure that the MTC Officers were informed if MTC Councillors had given their apologies for the working party meetings as otherwise they were not in a position to arrange for substitutes.

69. Review of annual independent RoSPA (Royal Society of Prevention of Accidents) inspection of Shurnhold Fields: It was noted that this was not an equipped play area or a playing field with organised sport on, and so there were less concerns about uneven surfaces on the grassed areas for example. RD did express a concern that rabbits and moles dug up the surface and left it uneven but it was agreed that this was the nature of a field and even if money was spent on levelling the ground it would be dug up by local wildlife straight away. The spoil left from the proposed wildflower meadow scrape could be used to fill any large holes that were considered dangerous.

ACTION: The MWPC Clerk raise the issue of timber decay on the kissing gate post with the Right of Way Officer.

RD raised an issue with the 4/5" drop in the surface at the entrance gate, but concerns were raised if this was filled with shingle as it could easily be washed into the water course during a period of heavy rain. As the MWPC contractors were on site shortly to concrete in the noticeboard and bins etc, and they could be asked to infill the uneven surface at the entrance gate. RD went on to say that there was a further problem at the culvert ditch at the entrance gate, where water had washed fine aggregate into the drain area, and a concrete dam needed to be built.

ACTION: The area to be looked at when the Principal Drainage Engineer attends for a site visit, at the same time as the contractor, so a suitable solution can be arranged.

ACTION: The uneven surface at the gate entrance to be filled in with concrete by the contractors when they are on site installing the noticeboard etc.

RD raised the issue of the pile of tree branches that were on the RoSPA report, with the advisory note to remove or chip branches to reduce the risk of fire. RD advised that FOSF had previously been advised that they were allowed to burn vegetative waste on site, in line with the guidelines that had been provided. RD expressed that he felt that getting a chipper on site would involve diesel and emitting gases from rotting mulch that would leave more of a carbon footprint than burning the waste and proposed to burn the waste in a 40-gallon oil drum he had; which he could make into an incinerator. The reason they had not burnt the waste to date was because it had been too dry. The burn would only be done when the wind was coming from the south and would blow the smoke across the fields and not towards houses; there would be less smoke with an intense fire in the incinerator than from a bonfire.

ACTION: The FOSF to burn the tree branches in an incinerator on site, when there were suitable wind conditions.

The MWPC Clerk pointed out that there were a few minor repairs needed to repair the chain link fence, which under the Transfer of Ownership was the responsibility of the councils as landowners.

ACTION: The council caretakers to repair the chain link fence as part of their regular inspection visits.

70. Requests of Friends of Shurnhold Fields:

a) Proposal for entrance gates/car park/bund: It had been agreed earlier in the meeting that there would be 10 parking spaces, and it was subsequently agreed that they would be in one linear row parallel to the fence. Cllr Carter advised that each space was 2.5m wide and 3.4m for the length of the cars. There would be a much wider area to be covered in plainings, to make a square shape, to allow for entrance and exit of vehicles. The parking spaces will not be marked out initially.

The members reviewed a map (*attached to the Minutes*) that had been prepared by the FOSF which showed a car park area, relocated entrance gate, bunds and wildflower meadow.

It was also agreed to build bunds of earth 600mm high and 1m wide parallel to Bath Road and on the north and west side of the car park; this was to prevent vehicles entering the car park from entering onto the wider grass area. The idea behind bunds

was that they would be relatively maintenance free compared to hedging. The entrance gate would be relocated further back from the main entrance, past the car park entrance to the left, and would be for access for maintenance (grass cutting contractor for etc) vehicles only. There would also be a bicycle rack installed.

There followed a discussion about a potential height restriction barrier at the car park entrance to be constructed from the old goal posts left on site. This was requested by the FOSF to restrict entrance to the car park of cars with roof boxes, vans, camper vans and lorries.

It was agreed that a bund would delineate the car park well, and could be made to look as though it's part of the natural environment by being grassed over.

The FOSF wished to relocate the gate which would require digging it up and making a welding repair. There was also a plan for a lockable barrier at the car park entrance to be locked at night by volunteers.

RESOLVED:

The following proposal was agreed to form the basis of a pre-application enquiry/planning application:

1. The car park to have 10 spaces, in a linear arrangement parallel with the Bath Road.
2. The car park to be surrounded on the north and west side by a soil bund to be grassed over, 600mm high and 1m wide.
3. The car park to be formed from plainings to be obtained free of charge following local road works (from Wiltshire Council).
4. A cycle rack to be installed.
5. A height restriction barrier to be included in the planning application, but some research be undertaken before a decision is made; as to whether a purpose-built barrier/a recycled goal post barrier/or no barrier be installed.
6. A decision on whether a lockable barrier be installed across the car park entrance to be made at a later date.

The Town Clerk left the meeting (at 3.20pm).

b) Wildflower Meadow:

The MWPC Clerk advised that there was a Wildflower Meadow project being run by Wiltshire Council and the Clerk had put the Shurnhold Fields project forward as it met the criteria of being on amenity land; however they were not making a decision for another couple of months and so to be part of that project would mean a meadow area being made in Autumn the following year.

A quote had already been obtained from the MWPC grass cutting contractor to scrape the proposed area for a wildflower meadow (to the right of the entrance to the rear end of the housing building line) for a cost of £1,255 excluding VAT and one of the FOSF members (horticulturally trained) had obtained a cost for a suitable type and amount of seeds of £179 from Boston Seeds Ltd, to be sown in the Autumn.

RESOLVED:

1. MWPC to organise the scrape by J H Jones at £1,255 and pay for it from the Open Space Maintenance contribution. The contractor to meet FOSF on site, with

the Principal Drainage Engineer to agree where best for the scape to be located into bunds.

2. MWPC to purchase the wildflower seeds from Boston Seeds Ltd at £179 and pay for it from the Open Space Maintenance contribution. FOSF to send the MWPC Clerk the details of which seeds to order. As it was unknown if the seed mix included yellow rattle, which was essential as parasitic to grass and must be sown in Autumn; the MWPC Clerk to have delegated powers to spend up to £250 on the seeds to ensure that yellow rattle was included.

71. Actions for agenda items at the next Working Party meeting:

1. Response to pre-application enquiry and if so required, update on planning application made.
2. Obtain quote for the ground works to prepare the car park for plainings, build bunds; and to lay the plainings when delivered.
3. To calculate amount of plainings required (Cllr Carter to calculate from formula provided by Wiltshire Council Highways)
4. Update on anticipated date for plainings (dependent on local planned roadworks)
5. Review research on height restriction barrier
6. Review research on car park entrance gate lockable barrier

72. Next meeting: It was noted that the next meeting of the FOSF was on Tues 29th October, and would be the AGM. The meeting was at the Town Hall at 7pm for 7.30pm. The MWPC Clerk offered to advertise this on the social media networks for George Ward Gardens and Shurnhold.

The next meeting of the Shurnhold Fields Working Group will be on Wednesday 6th November at 7pm at the Town Hall.

73. Social media post: It was noted that there had been a request on the George Ward Gardens Facebook page asking about the plans for an all-weather path and a trim trail at Shurnhold Fields. It was agreed that a response be made saying that these things had only been muted at initial meetings and that a new trim trail had been recently installed at King George V park.

The meeting closed at 3.50pm.

Shurnhold Fields (esdwe, / open space maintenance cont.)

16/09/2019

Melksham without Parish Council Current Year

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Nominal Ledger Details

2019/20

| Nominal A/c | | 347 EMR Shurnhold Fields project | | | Annual Budget | 0.00 |
|----------------------------|------------|----------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Centre | | 0 | | | Committed Exp | 0.00 |
| Month | Date | Reference | Source | Transaction | Debit | Credit |
| Opening Balance | | | | | | 96,264.73 |
| 1 | 25/04/2019 | V1063-BACS | Cashbook | Set up costs | 250.00 | |
| 2 | 23/05/2019 | V1086-BACS | Cashbook | Petrol reimburse for SHF Grass | 21.19 | |
| 2 | 23/05/2019 | V1092-BACS | Cashbook | Inv.13099-S/hold Fiel GrassCut | 395.00 | |
| 3 | 27/06/2019 | V1125-BACS | Cashbook | Mower Petrol reimbur SHF Grass | 36.98 | |
| 5 | 24/08/2019 | V1191-BACS | Cashbook | Sack dispensers for SHF & Bags | 340.66 | |
| 6 | 19/09/2019 | V1233-BACS | Cashbook | Bins for Shurnhold Field x2 | 709.84 | |
| 6 | 19/09/2019 | V1235-BACS | Cashbook | 45062- SHF ROSPA Inspection | 68.50 | |
| 6 | 19/09/2019 | V1241-BACS | Cashbook | Petrol for mower reimburse-SHF | 44.88 | |
| Account Totals | | | | | 1,867.05 | 96,264.73 |
| Net Balance Month 7 | | | | | | 94,397.68 |

+ Noticeboard Invoice to follow (Arien) £698.
 + JH Jones Invoice to follow (to install noticeboard, bins etc.) T.B.A.

2018/19.

| Nominal A/c 347 EMR Shurnhold Fields project | | | | | Annual Budget | 0.00 |
|--|------------|------------|----------|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Centre 0 | | | | | Committed Exp | 0.00 |
| Month | Date | Reference | Source | Transaction | Debit | Credit |
| Opening Balance | | | | | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| 12 | 15/03/2019 | V1028-SH&F | Cashbook | Shurnhold Fields openspace | | 97,383.75 |
| 12 | 31/03/2019 | 70 | Journal | used for Legal Fees | 940.00 | |
| 12 | 31/03/2019 | 77 | Journal | Used to fund expenditure | 179.02 | |
| Account Totals | | | | | 1,119.02 | 97,383.75 |
| Net Balance Month 12 | | | | | | 96,264.73 |

