

WESTERLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ENVIRONMENT & LEISURE COMMITTEE
19th DECEMBER 2016
HELD AT MANOR HALL, COALPIT HEATH

Present: Councillors: Cllrs B Taylor, J Butler, A Fay, M Crumpton

Officer – V Anderson – Interim Clerk/RFO

33. Apologies for absence

Cllr A GIBBS

34. Declarations of Interest under The Localism Act 2011

None

35. To approve minutes of the meetings held 17th October 2016

Decision: proposed by Cllr B Taylor and seconded by Cllr A Fay, agreed by all that the minutes of 17th October 2016 be accepted.

36. Update on previous matters arising from minutes of 17th October 2016

Repairs to fence and replacement of gate on Newman's Field – the clerk reported that the specification to enable a like for like quotation has yet to be written.

Zip wire – due to be re-tensioned 20th December.

Notice Board – Cllr Butler reported that building consent may be required due to its proposed location and what information is to be displayed.

Disruptive person at Bitterwell Lake – the clerk reported that he was unable to identify the address of the offender he is to write to advising that their behaviour is not acceptable as they do not live within the parish. It was suggested that the police may be able to provide the relevant address, Mr Anderson should contact the local beat officer to see if this is possible.

Animal waste bin at Coalville Road – the clerk reported that he had no further communication from Merlin Housing regarding their original request. Cllr Crumpton identified that there was an animal waste bin not too far away that could possibly be relocated to a suitable junction nearby.

37. To consider whether to discuss any proposal to fund an artificial cricket pitch on Westerleigh Playing Fields

Cllr Taylor has received two calls asking whether there is room for other cricket clubs to play on Westerleigh pitch. Cllr Butler's response was that WPC had taken Westerleigh CC's advice that any additional matches would take the pitch beyond its capacity.

A second enquiry came from Miles Harris of SG Council (01454 865881), who enquired on behalf of Downend CC and Bristol Indians CC. He said there may be a possibility of providing an artificial pitch with funding by Gloucestershire Cricket Board. The first enquirer from Downend CC said the same.

The recommendation was that WPC should approach Westerleigh Cricket Club to establish whether they would support any discussions before considering supporting funding and ongoing maintenance for an artificial pitch.

Members discussed the existing arrangements and questioned if there would be sufficient capacity to install an artificial pitch alongside the existing grass one and if there was sufficient capacity to increase the number of games played each week. Other issues raised were:

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- Who would be responsible for obtaining the funding and progressing the project?
- What charges would be appropriate for clubs that are outside of the parish?
- Outside of parish clubs use, the only days available would be midweek. How would this impact on future fixture lists?
- Would additional club play have a detrimental effect on the condition of the rest of the field?
- Are changing/club facilities required for non-parish based teams?
- If Gloucestershire County Cricket Board could provide funding would South Gloucestershire County Council be the appropriate and qualified body to pursue the grant funding?

Cllr Crumpton raised the point that if the matter was to be progressed it would be a positive indication that the Parish Council is promoting a healthy lifestyle.

Decision: Agreed by all. Following the debate about the matters raised above it was agreed that Cllr Taylor would follow up on the enquiry and report back to the committee at a future meeting.

38. Bitterwell Lake – To reconsider a request to close sections of Bitterwell Lake during fishing competitions

According to local traditions, this is not allowed under the terms of the gifting of the use of the lake to the people of Henfield and surrounding areas, but someone was told by an angler that Mr Terry Smith had the right to do it now he runs the lake as a commercial venture.

Cllr Fay reported that some residents have been complaining about closures for fishing competitions. One resident complained that the lake was closed on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday in one week and she received considerable abuse from one fisherman, allegedly the one who organises the matches, although other competition fishermen did not appear to mind her walking around.

It was duly noted that Mr Terry Smith was unable to attend the meeting as he had sent his apologies.

Many of the public audience had strong feelings on the matter of closure, at the chairman's discretion they spoke on many matters of concern. Some of the issues they raised are:

- The lake was gifted many years ago by a local parishioner to members of the parish and as such parishioners have every right to access it at any given time.
- There are reports of verbal abuse by anglers attending the fishing competitions against members of public walking along the banks.
- There had been night time activities resulting in some noise when fishermen leave in the late evening or early hours of the morning, sometimes leaving the gate open.
- There is no given right to close off the lake during competition times.
- The signage being used to notify the public of the competition dates and times are poor.
- Signs regarding restricting access due to health and safety issues are regarded as having no substance.
- It is not clear if the parish council have legal ownership or have the appropriate rights as appointed trustees as there appears to be a lack of legal documentation regarding the gifting.

The clerk advised that, in his opinion, there was a lack of supporting evidence for the Council to make an informed decision regarding permitting closures. This was due to not having prior access to any original documentation regarding the gifting of the lake and the fact that Mr Terry Smith was not available to make any representation on behalf of himself and the fishermen.

Decision: Agreed by all that further evidence should be gathered regarding terms of ownership and legal responsibility for the lake before any decision is made in supporting Mr Smith's request to have formal closure periods during fishing competitions.

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39. Committee to consider the waste facilities at Bitterwell Lake.

Mr Terry Smith has a commercial waste bin in the car park, near the gate, but apparently keeps it locked, so people just dump their rubbish beside or on top of it, which means it sometimes gets spread around. Again, the Committee need to define what facilities should be provided by the Council.

During the discussion regarding the use of the bin and Mr Smith's request for the Council to fund it, it was reported by a member of public that it is regularly visited by a van driver who often leaves the gate open. The van driver may be known to Mr Smith as they appear to have the relevant key to the bin so there is a question to be asked what purpose (i.e. commercial use) is it being used for?

What wasn't clearly identified during the discussion was the type of rubbish that is being left beside the bin and who (members of public or fishermen) is leaving the rubbish outside.

Decision: Agreed by all that further information is required (from Mr Smith) before a firm decision is made.

40. Committee to consider providing public toilet facilities at Bitterwell Lake

Mr Smith is required under his licence to provide toilet facilities at Bitterwell Lake which is to be kept clean and disinfected daily. Mr Smith no longer wishes to provide this facility and is proposing to remove the portable unit from January 2017.

The committee have in the past discussed providing public toilet facilities but came to no conclusion as there are a number of issues to overcome before moving forward with the proposal. Following a short discussion on Mr Smith's licence obligations the committee felt that it needed a private discussion with Mr Smith before making a formal decision to revise the licence agreement.

Decision: Agreed by all that further information is required (from Mr Smith) before a firm decision is made. Mr Smith is to be invited to a private meeting to discuss this (and all other matters regarding Bitterwell Lake), meanwhile Mr Smith still has an obligation under his current term of lease to provide toilet facilities extending beyond January 2017.

41. Committee to consider reducing the height of the hedge obscuring the view from the car park.

Members of the committee discussed the height of the hedge that runs alongside the car park which is now obscuring the view across the lake. It was acknowledged that the hedge had increased in height too much which needs attention.

During discussion a member of the public (Adrian) volunteered to assist with the cutting back of the hedge free of charge, an offer which was warmly accepted.

Decision: Proposed by Cllr B Taylor, seconded by Cllr M Crumpton and agreed by all that Cllr A Fay be empowered to liaise with Adrian regarding the cutting back of the hedge to an acceptable height.

42. Chalet Rent and Bitterwell Lake Fishing Rights payments

The committee noted that all payments were up to date.

43. To consider asking the Avon Wildlife Trust to inform Westerleigh Parish Council when they are holding an event at Says Court Farm

The committee recognised that future events being held at Says Court Farm by the Avon Wildlife Trust were not being communicated effectively.

Decision: Agreed by all that the Avon Wildlife Trust be asked to provide information regarding future events at Says Court Farm so that they can be placed on both ward notice boards and also request that local schools be informed accordingly.

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44. Payment of Account

None presented

45. Date of next meeting – 20th February 2017

DRAFT

Signed

Date: