

Report of the meeting of the Playing Fields and Cemetery Committee
held on 1 September 2020 at 7.00pm via video conference

Present: Cllr Helen Harrison (Chairman)
Cllr Clive Parkinson
Cllr Chris Davies
Cllr Bob Griffin
Cllr Jayne Stansfield
Cllr Martin Trueman (joined late)

Wendy Sydenham (Deputy Clerk)

(Cllr Pam Shipp – absent)

1. TO RECEIVE ANY APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Angela Symonds – another commitment
(Mike Elcock – St Mary’s Churchyard)

2. TO RECEIVE ANY REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Chairman of Thornbury Town Football Club was welcomed to the meeting and invited to address the Committee. The Club Chairman reported that he had had discussions with South Gloucestershire Council about the possibility of bidding for future CIL funds for the Football Club. He asked for a member of the Committee to support this bid. The Committee highlighted that more clarification would be needed on the source of these funds and that it could not be from existing CIL funds that were already earmarked for the Town Council. The Club Chairman confirmed that it was his understanding that these were new funds. The Club Chairman was asked to liaise with the Deputy Clerk when further information was received from South Gloucestershire Council. Cllr Clive Parkinson offered to discuss this further with the Club Chairman once this further information was available.

The Chair of the Committee thanked the Club Chairman and invited him to stay for item 7 of the agenda. It was agreed to bring forward item 7.

3. TO RECEIVE ANY MEMBERS’ DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Cllr Martin Trueman joined the meeting.)

Cllr Martin Trueman declared an interest in matters relating to Thornbury Town Football Club as a member of the Club.

4. TO ELECT A VICE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE

The Chair highlighted that this was the first opportunity for the Committee to elect a Vice Chair as meetings since February had been cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The Chair asked for nominations for Vice Chair. Cllr Clive Parkinson confirmed that, in the absence of any other nominations, he was very happy to continue as Vice Chair. No other nominations were received. Cllr Jayne Stansfield seconded the proposal and it was unanimously agreed that Cllr Clive Parkinson should continue as Vice Chair of the Committee.

7. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON MATTERS RELATING TO THORNBURY TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the refurbishment of the changing rooms was complete and had been carried out within budget, including upgrading of the baby changing facilities in the toilets.

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that work had begun on the new spectator stand. The foundations had been laid. The Club Chairman reported that once the foundations were complete, the new stand would be installed and the existing stand moved.

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that she and the Clerk were liaising with the Football Club on the risk assessments and plans for restarting football matches, and that there were some issues still to be resolved. The Deputy Clerk highlighted that a recent change in guidance meant that spectators would now be allowed at matches and that, in theory, this could be up to 150 spectators. The Club Chairman reported that in reality the number of spectators would most likely be less than this. The Deputy Clerk stated that this seemed like a large number of people in light of restrictions on numbers in other areas of public life and may be difficult for the Football Club to manage in a way that complied with current guidance on social distancing. The Deputy Clerk highlighted that she and the Clerk therefore had concerns regarding the increased risk that the high number of spectators would bring. Cllr Clive Parkinson proposed that the Committee note that it welcomed the return of football to the town provided that the risk assessments and plans complied with current guidance and that we receive confirmation that the league was also content with the risk assessments and plans. Cllr Bob Griffin seconded this proposal and it was unanimously agreed.

(The Club Chairman left the meeting at this point.)

The Committee noted that it did not support the current plans for the extension to the Pavilion and that the Football Club were aware of this, and had been asked in writing to submit alternative plans if they wished to proceed with the extension at any point.

5. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON ANY OPERATIONAL ISSUES OR MATTERS ARISING FROM THE REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18.02.20 NOT CONSIDERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda. The report was noted.

6. TO RECEIVE A GENERAL REPORT ON ST MARYS CLOSED CHURCHYARD

Mike Elcock's apologies were noted and the Deputy Clerk read out an update that he had provided - the path at the entrance to the Church is more or less finished, they are just waiting for the contractors to return; a reduced number of holy mowers are keeping the churchyard tidy; there are some outstanding issues including the fitting of a memorial bench, training in strimming and work needed on some of the tombs.

8. TO CONSIDER A REQUEST FROM THORNBURY RUGBY CLUB

The Deputy Clerk confirmed that the Rugby Club were marking out a second pitch on the Chantry Field and providing posts – this has been agreed with Committee members offline during the COVID-19 restrictions. The Rugby Club had also requested a second Portaloo be provided and a shed or similar building installed for the storage of equipment. The request was discussed. It was agreed that the Committee would allow a second Portaloo but that this should be identified as a “Ladies” facility, and the existing Portaloo identified as a “Men’s” facility. The second Portaloo should be placed in the same area as the existing one, at a distance that complied with social distancing guidelines, and that the hedges behind the Portaloo should continue to be kept higher than the rest of the hedges to ensure the Portaloo's were as well hidden as possible from nearby residents. The Committee also agreed however that it would not want a shed or similar building to be installed on the Chantry Field as it was felt this may encourage antisocial behaviour.

9. TO CONSIDER MATTERS RELATING TO COUNCIL'S PLAY AREAS

9.1 To note the latest RoSPA Play Safety Inspection Report 2020 and schedule of actions

The full RoSPA Inspection Report for 2020 had been circulated previously. The schedule of actions from the Report had been circulated with the meeting papers and was noted. The Deputy Clerk highlighted that there were no high risk actions and relatively few medium risk actions. A number of the medium risk actions were related to items that it was hoped would be replaced over the next few years as part of the parks replacement programme. The Deputy Clerk confirmed that no progress had been made to date with the actions due to staff shortages during the COVID-19 restrictions. However, now that staffing was back to normal levels, actions would be addressed in priority order and progress reported back to the Committee.

9.2 To consider issues relating to the skatepark

The Deputy Clerk highlighted that there were a number of repairs highlighted in the RoSPA report as needed in the skatepark, and that it may be difficult to find contractors who could carry these out. The issue of the skatepark was discussed, both the repairs needed and the longer term plans for the skatepark. It was agreed that a site meeting would be arranged with Committee members and the leader of Thornbury Krunch in order to discuss these issues further.

9.3 To consider the parks replacement programme

The Committee noted that it had not been possible to carry out consultations on the next play areas to be updated due to COVID-19 restrictions. It was agreed to defer discussion of the parks replacement programme until early 2020 at which point it was hoped that these consultations could be planned for Spring 2020.

9.4 To receive an update on splash pad maintenance

It was agreed to discuss all issues relating to the splash pad under item 15 of the agenda.

10. TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON RENOVATIONS TO THE WAR MEMORIAL

An email from the War Memorials Trust had been circulated and was noted. This had confirmed that our application may be eligible for funding but that we needed to have a conservation-accredited professional advisor involved in the project. We could apply for a grant for 75% of the cost of the advisor. It was noted that the aim would be to complete the renovations before Remembrance Day 2021 if possible.

11. TO CONSIDER THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 SITUATION ON THE COMMITTEE'S BUDGET

The Deputy Clerk reported that it had been proposed that this became a standing item on Committee agendas. The COVID-19 situation had meant that some budgeted projects had not been progressed but also that some areas would be significantly overspent e.g. cleaning costs and PPE. The Finance and Policy Committee would take the lead on pulling together these issues, but individual Committees may need to consider items related to their budget in due course.

12. TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM COUNCILLOR SURGERIES

It was noted that Councillor Surgeries were not currently taking place due to COVID-19 restrictions.

13. TO RECEIVE ANY MATTERS ON THE GROUNDS OF URGENCY

There were no urgent matters to consider.

14. TO RESOLVE UNDER THE PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960 THAT THE PUBLIC AND PRESS BE EXCLUDED DURING CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS OF BUSINESS AS PUBLICITY WOULD BE PREJUDICIAL TO THE PUBLIC INTEREST BECAUSE OF THE NATURE OF THE BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED

Resolved.

15. TO CONSIDER AN ISSUE RELATING TO THE SPLASH PAD

The Deputy Clerk reported that the splash pad resurfacing works were due to take place in mid-September and that quotes would shortly be sought for replacing the fencing around the splash pad.

Improvements to the splash pad water supply were discussed. It was agreed that the Deputy Clerk should seek clarification on costs relating to an increased supply of water. Further legal advice had been obtained regarding works to increase the water supply and the Committee agreed a proposed way forward.