

MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE AMENITIES, LAND AND PROPERTIES COMMITTEE, HELD ON WEDNESDAY 5th MAY 2021 2.00 P.M.

Present:
The Mayor Councillor M S Robinson

Councillors:
C Barreto, M P Brindle, B J Canham, D M Crawford, C Harvey,
D J Hodgkinson (Vice Chair), J James, J Hollis, T J Jermy (Chair) S N H Wright (Non-Voting)

Officers in attendance:
Mark Webster Countryside Officer, Alan Yorke Deputy Town Clerk
David Brooks – VEM Officer. Roger Stebbings Work Manager
Chris Crimmen Committee Secretary

992/20	<u>DECLARATIONS OF ANY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS</u> None.
993/20	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> Apologies were received from Councillor J James.
994/20	<u>MINUTES</u> RESOLVED: The minutes of the Amenities Land and Property Committee's meeting held on 7th April 2021 received by Council on 27th April 2021 be confirmed as a true record and signed/initialled by the Committee Chairman.
995/20	<u>ACTION POINTS & UPDATES</u> The Chair asked the VEM Officer to explain why the application for the Wheels on the Field had not yet been signed off yet. He explained that the full signed paperwork had not yet been received by the Council. This event has been agreed by the committee that subject to signed paperwork being received the event can go ahead on the 27 th June 2021.
996/20	<u>HEALTH & SAFETY</u> Nothing to report.
997/20	<u>STREETSCENE & COUNTRYSIDE OFFICERS' REPORT</u> The Works Manager reported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repairing existing benches and making six others using Heritage metal bench ends – (see report Appendix A). • Report on bins – see report and minute number 999/20. • Play Areas. The Countryside Officer reviewed his monthly report (see Appendix A) and covered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The footbridge and repairable picnic table will be repainted in May. • The footpath to Nuns Bridges has been renewed by the volunteers. • Tree planting of 30 fruit trees around the town have been purchased and will be planted in October. • Tree safety work is going ahead. • The Shambles – still issues obtaining quotations. • Thomas Paine Plinth – work has started repairing the plinth. • A contractor for the roundels has been appointed and replicas will be made. Councillors noted both reports.

	At this point Councillor C Harvey left the meeting.
998/20	<p><u>END OF YEAR FINANCIAL REPORT</u></p> <p>Councillors received a report on the end-of-year financial position showing an underspend of £1,600. There followed a discussion and Councillor T Jermy proposed and Councillor B Canham seconded:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the underspend of £1,600 be carried forward to reserve for a new picnic bench costing approximately £500 with the rest to be put in a tree reserve for use in the new year.</p>
999/20	<p><u>PURCHASE/REFURBISHMENT OF BENCHES AND PURCHASE OF BINS</u></p> <p>The Chair asked councillors to discuss and agree the following three items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>On whether to use any remaining underspend on the purchase of additional benches and/or bins.</u> There followed a discussion and Councillor D Hodgkinson proposed and Councillor T Jermy seconded: RESOLVED: That the Breckland District Council green bin near the Fairfields School be replaced by one of Thetford Town Council bins with lids already in stock. 2. <u>Whether to replace the bench removed from Abbey Meadows.</u> There followed a discussion and Councillor B Canham proposed and Councillor M Brindle seconded: RESOLVED: That the bench removed from Abbey Meadows should be replaced. 3. <u>Whether to accept a request to move a bench at Barnham Cross playing fields.</u> There followed a discussion and Councillor T Jermy proposed and Councillor B Canham seconded: RESOLVED: That the bench backing onto houses in Bracken Road be moved to another site 100 yards further up the footpath.
1000/20	<p><u>CHRISTMAS LIGHTS INSTALLATION TENDER</u></p> <p>Councillors reviewed the Christmas light installation specification and agreed there were no amendments needed.</p> <p>At this point Councillor M Robinson left the meeting.</p>
1001/20	<p><u>SMALL GRANTS</u></p> <p>Councillors discussed a grant from the Friends of Thetford Station which is an invaluable transport hub and heritage site frequented by visitors and locals. The intention of 'The Fernal Destination' project is to greatly enhance people's experience of Thetford Railway Station, whilst safeguarding a listed building. Unfortunately, the group cannot supply all the documents needed. It was agreed to review the rules to be able to include groups like this and there will be an agenda item next month. After a discussion Councillor B Canham proposed and Councillor D Canham seconded:</p> <p>RESOLVED: That Thetford Town Council award a small grant of £300 to the Friends of Thetford Station project.</p> <p>Shown below is a schedule of all grants awarded in the last 12 months.</p>

SCHEDULE OF SMALL GRANTS FINANCIAL YEAR 2020/21			
DATE	BENEFICIARY	AMOUNT	DETAIL
15.05.20	SIMPLE NORFOLK	£ 300.00	SIMPLE NORFOLK 874/19
15.05.20	KEYSTONE DEVELOPMENT TRUST	£ 300.00	KEYSTONE DEVELOPMENT TRUST 874/19
15.05.20	CHARLES BURRELL CENTRE	£ 300.00	CHARLES BURRELL CENTRE
20.05.20	ATHENA EDUCATION SUPPORT CIC	£ 300.00	ATHENA EDUCATION SUPPORT CIC
30.06.20	FULMERSTON FAMILY AND COMMUNITY PROJECT	£ 293.20	FULMERSTON FAMILY AND COMM PROJECT
14.07.20	NORWICH RD ESTATE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION	£ 150.00	NORWICH RD ESTATE RES ASSO
14.09.20	THETFORD SOCIETY	£ 300.00	THETFORD SOCIETY SMALL GRANT
14.09.20	THE HORTICULTURAL INDUSTRY SCHEME	£ 300.00	THE HORTICULTURAL INDUSTRY SCHEME SMALL GRANT
16.10.20	FRIENDS OF THE CHARLES BURRELL MUSEUM	£ 300.00	friends of the charles burrell museum small grant
08.12.20	THE VERA TRUST CIC	£ 300.00	THE VERA TRUST CIC
08.01.21	THETFORD VINEYARD CHURCH	£ 300.00	Thetford Vineyard Church
18.02.21	THETFORD TOWN FOOTBALL COUNCIL	£ 300.00	Thetford Town Football Council
29.03.21	LEAPING HARE	£ 300.00	Leaping Hare Small Grant
31.03.21	INVOLVE RAZEEM	£ 300.00	INVOLVE RAZEEM CIC APPROVED IN MARCH
31.03.21	BOWLS CLUB	£ 300.00	BOWLS CLUB APPROVED IN MARCH 21
TOTAL		£ 4,343.20	
1002/20	<u>CORRESPONDENCE</u> None.		
1003/20	<u>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</u> None.		
1004/20	<u>COMMITTEE OFFICERS UPDATE</u> None.		

Chairman.

Appendix – Streetscene and Countryside Reports

Streetscene Report to A.L.P. Committee

5th May 2021

Benches

I have completed 2 of the benches which have been made from existing bench ends and metal slats from stock, there are 3 more to be finished off. Once assembled they need to be taken to Barnham to be sprayed black, so they should all be available for use within next 2 months:

The repair of the better picnic bench at Nun's Bridges can be undertaken by the volunteer group (see below) in May, the one in the worse state will be replaced with a wheelchair-friendly black recycled plastic picnic table once it has been decided how many picnic tables are to be ordered. If any further picnic tables are required anywhere then I can put in a new concrete pad at approximately £100 per time for materials and approx. 1 day of works team labour - **decision required: whether to buy additional picnic tables for Nun's Bridges or any other sites, if resources permit.**

The bench removed from Abbey Meadows due to vandalism, public comments against it from women who said that they were intimidated having to walk past the people using it – **decision required: should it be returned?**

We have had a request from a resident of Bracken Road who lives near the playing fields: "I'm writing to you in concern to the bench just next to my fence it's very frequently people specially teens getting together there smoking weed drinking talking loud and swearing sometimes we have to avoid going in the garden due the smell of weed. Would like to ask your support see if it's possible arrange a solution for this perhaps move the bench up a bit". I have had a look at the site and it would be possible to move this bench a bit further away from both the road and the houses, to a spot behind the hedge behind the school grounds where it is much less likely to be a problem –

decision required: should it be moved?

Bins

I am currently carrying out a full inventory of litter bins, dog bins, grit bins and benches all round the town. This will look at whether they are metal/plastic, what condition they are in, if they are open-topped, etc: councillors are invited to suggest priority locations for replacing open-topped bins. Once this inventory is completed a decision can be made on how many additional bins should be purchased (there is a saving to be made on the costs of bins if ordered in bulk, but this is not huge). As things stand, 5 of the new litter bins are currently in stock. If bins that need replacing are Breckland's, then potentially they could buy them off us and we could install them.

The bin on Mallow Road (Cloverfields) by the woodland which had a swinging door because it had no lock has been replaced (left). Another bin further down that same road (right) seems to have the same issue and may therefore be a priority for replacement.

Bins not being emptied: the bin at the skatepark is done by us, it is checked each Tuesday (by Chris on his bike) and if full this is reported back so that it can be emptied on a Wednesday. The bins at Castle Park are emptied by IDVerde – they apparently had staffing issues just after Easter but this problem does now seem to have been resolved.

The location at the bottom of the 'wooden hill' in Castle Park where the arms of a concrete-sided bench remain has been checked but there does not appear to be a concrete pad underneath. Other locations in Castle Park where a new bench could be installed without the considerable extra expense of employing an archaeologist on a watching brief are:

- On the site of the cracked plinth between the toilets and the play area.
- On the concrete pad near Castle Lane between the ramparts and the play area.
- North of the surfaced path which runs parallel to Castle Street, i.e. between Castle Street and the path (this is outside the scheduled ancient monument).

Decision required – whether to install benches at any of these locations, or elsewhere.

Play areas

Bergamot Close seesaw – this has been repaired and is functioning. The rubber matting material which is hanging down from the middle is there to try to stop any hands being put up into the mechanism: it is not possible to cover this up with a metal plate as this would prevent the seesaw moving as it needs to (see next page):

Replacing the little wooden posts on the Castle Park play area: quotes were obtained, the order was issued to Playscape, and the work has been completed. The trim trail seems to be proving extremely popular, with no sign of damage to the surface as yet:

The catches on the gates are to be replaced (in-house) at Bergamot and Redcastle play areas.

Roger Stebbings.

[Countryside Report starts on the next page]

Countryside & Planning Officer's report to A.L.P. committee

Thetford Town Council

5th May 2021

Please note that this report does not cover all my work – Planning issues are not covered, and matters connected with improving wildlife habitats on the Cemetery and Allotments are also omitted.

Ford Meadow / Nun's Bridges / Lady Gentle Meadow

The last of the newly planted trees which are among grass and weeds have been given mulch mats to help them get established.

The footbridge surface, and repairable picnic table, will be painted in early May (weather permitting).

The ballast added to the path between the paddocks to reduce the waterlogging situation seems to have done the trick for now. This has made the path fully passable without getting wet feet again, although more will be added to fill in remaining dips and even out the surface level before next winter.

Volunteers have reused a mixture of earth and cut branches (which were removed when the plane trees were storm damaged) to fill in the remaining holes in the path between the plane trees:

I have also added some woodchip provided by a local contractor, to make this a much more easily navigable path (see next page):

Further steps have been installed to provide easier access to the scraped area at the corner nearest the road bridges. At the far end from the car park the degree of slope was so small that steps would not actually help access, so a small amount of scalping off of earth from the top of the bund was carried out to provide level access at that point. If resources permit then one or more signs will be installed at one or more of these access points to inform visitors about the creeping marshwort.

Barnham Cross Common

IDVerde have committed to complete the remaining tree and scrub clearance which was supposed to have been done this winter by the end of October. This will therefore require the creation of a financial reserve for this purpose. If this is satisfactorily completed then we can then look at further clearance for early 2022.

Volunteers fitted mulch mats to all of the trees planted near the playing fields.

I have repaired a number of sections of fencing including a gate missing its bolt by the playing fields and the broken fencing next to the "hide" which looks out onto the BTO lakes:

Mains water supply to the west side of the common will require a new trough and pipe which will be installed (in-house) within next two weeks and then the connection can be made by Anglian Water from their main pipe.

Melford Common and Castle Park

CGM have agreed to complete the fencing contract including the vegetation clearance and have staked out the line where the fence will go, but an installation date for the fencing is still yet to be confirmed.

Frederick's Wood

All looking well, new trees coming into leaf nicely.

Maine St, School Plain, Pine Close, Ramsey Close, Dane Close

1 quote of £830 has so far been received for the wall repair at School Plain.

The fallen fence panel at Dane Close has been replaced.

A volunteer task took place at Ramsey Close, mainly focused on fitting mulch mats to the newly planted trees, although we also cleared up rubbish and surveyed the sward of the wildflower areas to measure diversity, finding at least 8 different species present even at this early stage of the year.

Fitting mulch mat (left); gorse planted last year already in flower (right)!

Volunteer Group

Our activities have continued twice a week with the focus shifting to wildflower surveying, path work, and fitting mulch mats round many of our new trees.

We are looking forward to after the 17th May when 'social' gatherings are expected to be allowed outside without limits on numbers, we will hopefully be able to offer some more 'fun' activities to our hard-working volunteers, including visits to sites to look at and identify wildlife, to reward them for all their hard work clearing gorse over the winter – and before we ask them to do their least favourite job of ragwort pulling in July!

Tree planting 2021-22

The additional 35 fruit trees to be provided free by CGM are now due to be planted around the town in October.

There is also scope for more planting at a number of sites, over the next two months I will be developing a plan for this and beginning the process of applying for more free trees etc.

Preventing Plastic Pollution Project

Litter picks took place at Two Mile Bottom and Barnham Cross Common, with volunteers recording the plastic and other litter using standardised categories which can then be compared across the Great Ouse catchment and other river systems across the UK and Europe.

[About the project - Preventing Plastic Pollution](#)

Tree Safety Work

12-month safety work from last autumn's inspections is now going ahead. The removal of logs from Castle Park and the tree trunk from Mill lane are expected to take place next week. This year's inspections will take place sometime between May and August so that the inspector can see trees in leaf.

Mark Webster, Countryside and Planning Officer, 07553 388 551.

Other matters to be reported to A.L.P. Committee

5th May 2021

The Shambles

3 quotes are still being sought – 8 builders were initially contacted and 2 site visits took place, but the initial quote from Norse is so far the only one received. 8 more builders have now been contacted.

Thomas Paine Plinth

The procurement process is now complete and a contractor was appointed, they have already started the cleaning and repair of the stonework. Separate quotes are being obtained for the lettering: if (as expected) they come in at around £1K, this can also be authorised by the town clerk and the total cost of works on the plinth will be within the £5K set aside for this purpose.

Roundels

A contractor has been chosen and the original will be sent to them this week.

Painting of the interpretation boards can be done in-house.