

**LOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL
RECREATION COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of the Zoom meeting held on Wednesday 6 January 2021 at 7.45pm

Present:

Councillors: D Wixley (in the Chair)
R Brookes
S Murray
B Cohen
M Stubbings
J Jogia

Also in attendance:

Cllr Judy Jennings (until Min No. RC221)

Officers:

M Squire (Town Clerk)
P Bryce (Assistant Town Clerk – Civic & Administration)

RC210 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Omer.

RC211 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Wixley declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda item 13 as he is a regular attendee of the English-Speaking Union group.

Cllr Murray declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda items 8 and 9 (and any subsequent items relating directly to the Roding Valley Recreation Ground) as he lives locally to the area.

RC212 Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2020 were CONFIRMED as a correct record and will be signed by the Chairman.

RC213 Public Representations

None were received.

RC214 Town Clerk's / Chairman's Report

The Town Clerk highlighted a number of licences that need to be reviewed and renewed with external third-party groups.

RC215 Roding Valley Recreation Ground - Planting Scheme and Footpaths - Min no RC200.5

The Committee NOTED that the District Council would carry out the necessary work when ground conditions improve. The work could potentially be further delayed if there is ice and snow over the winter period.

RC216 Roding Valley Recreation Ground – Drainage Works – Min no RC200.11

The Committee NOTED that the contractors will not be returning to continue this work until the flood water has subsided.

RC217 Roding Valley Recreation Ground - Improvements Scheme – Min no RC200.6

Regrettably, in lieu of the budget and estimates discussions that had taken place at the preceding Resources and General Services Committee meeting and the ongoing financial constraints caused by the prevalent covid pandemic,

it was AGREED

- that this project could not continue in its existing format (see minute RC 226)
- that the public consultation had to be cancelled as the scheme had to be substantially scaled back because of financial constraints
- that with the reduced Earmarked fund of £50,000, consideration should be given to a more limited project of fixing the existing plumbing, electricity etc; and addressing the car park issues. i.e. landscaping of the area and provision of a gate
- that the Town Clerk would employ an external consultant to conduct a scoping survey to this effect.

RC218 Roding Valley Recreation Ground - Football Changing Room / Car Park Gates – Min no RC200.12

As only one quote had so far been received for the additional work remit, this item would be deferred until the next Recreation Committee meeting, when hopefully the full quota of estimations has been received.

RC219 Roding Valley Recreation Ground - Playground – Min no RC200.8

It is envisaged that the new site will need to be on a raised platform to ensure that it is not so susceptible to flooding.

It was AGREED that a playground consultant is invited to inspect the favoured area, adjacent to the tennis courts to provide expert advice and a written report

The additional Earmarked funds available for this project (see minute RC226) were also noted.

RC220 Roding Valley Recreation Ground – Football Pitches – Min no RC200.7

The Committee NOTED that the football pitches have not been used as the area remains flooded.

Cllr Jennings left the meeting during the following item.

RC221 Roding Valley Recreation Ground – New benches

Gratitude was expressed to Cllr Murray for approaching Cllr Metcalfe regarding her donation from her allocated Essex County Council (ECC) Locality Fund towards replacement benches and also to Cllr Metcalfe herself.

AGREED that in the absence of the Services Manager to provide input on the types of benches available (and their robustness to vandalism), the Town Clerk and Services Manager should proceed at their discretion to replace the two benches. Appropriate enquiries should also be made at Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) as they may have some spare benches.

Also AGREED that a list of all personal dedications on Town Council benches will be maintained to ensure future records are kept, in case of future vandalism / destruction.

RC222 Murray Hall

The Town Clerk informed the Committee of the Epping Forest Branch of the English-Speaking Union's decision to discontinue as a group and as such, they would no longer require use of the Murray Hall for their meetings. The Recreation Committee Chairman also provided further background information for the closure of this branch. The Committee NOTED the report.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee of a very live and urgent request from the National Health Service (NHS) to use the Murray Hall as a Covid-19 vaccination centre to combat the current pandemic. The NHS would use the hall from 8am to 8pm each day, 7 days a week and potentially for 6 months, (taking on all aspects of control over this period).

Whilst mindful of the potential inconvenience to our regular hirers and loss of income to the Town Council, it was widely felt that support to the NHS (under intense pressure) should be given. The national interest and support to local residents should come first in this 'hour of need'. A number of ancillary questions, concerns and stipulations were raised, which the Town Clerk would take forward with the NHS.

The Committee AGREED

- to allow the NHS use of the Murray Hall
- to delegate authority to the Town Clerk as to the hire rate
- that the Clerk should approach the Town Council's Strategy and Staff Group (SSG) to ratify.*

RC223 Kingsley Hall - Min no RC201

The Committee NOTED the report.

RC224 Hillyfields

224.1 Hillyfields Open Space Flood Alleviation Scheme - Min no RC 204

The contractors employed by Essex County Council (ECC) had not carried out some of the remedial work properly and had omitted to make certain ground repairs. The Town Clerk together with the Services Manager and the EFDC Principal Engineer, Environmental Protection and Drainage would continue to chase ECC for the completion of these works to the required level. The Committee NOTED the report.

224.2 Hillyfields Litter Bins

The Committee noted the report and AGREED that the Town Clerk and Services Manager should obtain costings for the purchase of new bins, together with installation and emptying costs for a future Committee meeting. It would be useful to propose prospective sites for the bins.

RC225 Epping Forest Initiative Min no EH233.1

The Committee NOTED the report and would leave the scheme in abeyance for the time being.

RC226 Financial Position

The current financial position together with details of the earmarked reserves was NOTED.

*SSG subsequently ratified on 7 January 2021

The Town Clerk (following the preceding Resources and General Services meeting) updated the committee on some general budget implications for the financial year 2021/2022 and particularly how they would affect this Committee. The Covid pandemic was having an adverse impact, not only in respect of this year's finances but also to the detriment of the following year's financial position.

In order for the precept increase to be kept at a reasonable level, the current level of earmarked funds would need to be scaled back and some projects would either need to be cancelled, amended or deferred.

In this adverse financial climate it was AGREED

- that the current project to revamp the Roding Valley Recreation Ground football changing rooms on a large re scale was not sustainable in the current financial climate and that the earmarked reserves for these works should be reduced by £60,000
- that an increase of £26,000 should be added to the earmarked funds for the Roding Valley Recreation Ground Playground, where there was an immediate need for a greater number of local residents.

Other proposed changes to earmarked funds were also noted.

RC227 Future Work of the Committee

The Committee Chairman advised that the land strip on the Roding Valley Recreation Ground behind the lake and adjacent to the River Roding had become a quagmire and is difficult to navigate.

The Town Clerk was asked to

- liaise with Chigwell Parish Council as it is suspected that they are responsible for this area of land.
- liaise with EFDC as they may have some practical ideas as how to allay this problem
- report back to a future Recreation Committee with subsequent findings.

The Committee Chairman also mentioned the quagmire at the access point to the Roding Valley Recreation Ground from the footpath linking Avondale Drive/ Avondale Close to Greensted Road which would be the responsibility of the Town Council.

Signed:
Date: 3 March 2021