

RECREATIONAL FACILITIES WORKING GROUP MEETING – 28 MAY 2021

At the remote meeting of the Recreational Facilities Working Group held by video conference on Friday 28 May 2021, the following Councillors were present: -

Mrs J Leggett - Chairperson

Mr M G Callam - Ms D Coleman

Mr J H Mallen

In attendance

Mr G Ranaweera - Town Clerk and Responsible
Financial Officer

Mr Ben Jervis - Sprowston Tree Warden

21/044. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

21/045. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 29 APRIL 2021

Minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2021 were agreed with no amendment.

21/046. MINUTES OF MEETING WITH SPROWSTON FC HELD 15 APRIL 2021

Minutes of the meeting with Sprowston FC held on 15 April 2021 were agreed with no amendment.

21/047. SPROWSTON TREE WARDENS

Ben commented on media coverage and tree planting initiatives coming forward following peoples increased interest in experiencing nature, as a result of the Covid pandemic.

He explained his role as Tree Warden for Sprowston, advising that he monitored protected trees in the parish. This had led him to raising complaints with Broadland District Council regarding some recent housing developments providing insufficient buffers for tree root protection zones during works.

Referring to Norfolk County Councils (NCC) scheme to plant 1 million trees, he informed Councillors that the Tree Warden Network were concerned and making enquiries as to how NCC would be able to plant 1 million trees, given the original intention was to only plant on public land.

21/047. SPROWSTON TREE WARDENS (CONTINUED)

The Forestry Commission had extended their application time for funding now that Norfolk County Council (NCC) were considering planting on private land as well as public. From the Tree Wardens Network perspective this gave them far more options moving forward.

Ben said he was in discussions with the Town Clerk to establish suitable areas for further tree planting in Sprowston explaining that one of the main issues was aftercare, citing planting of the NDR as an example of where this had been overlooked.

He was not aware if the Town Council could apply for funding however he and the Town Clerk were preparing a plan of action utilising the NCC scheme to make Sprowston a greener and more environmentally friendly, once more details were made available.

Ms D Coleman advised she had planted 40 Oak trees in a nursery bed in her garden and lots of people in Sprowston were doing the same. She felt there was a real will amongst residents to increase the number of trees growing in the parish. If planting was in verges or green spaces nearby residents could be asked to adopt a tree and this would resolve the issue of aftercare.

Ben referred to a scheme at Blithewood gardens where fruit and nut trees had been planted. Part of the project's intention was to get local people to care for the trees. He remarked it was a good idea to engage and involve residents.

Ms D Coleman accepted there were residents who did not want debris and detritus on verges or footpaths created by trees however she felt there were more people in favour of them.

Ben advised that historically there was a reluctance to plant trees in verges due to things such as rotten fruit and subsequent wasps etc. He suggested the creation of community orchards where residents were welcome to pick a proportion of the produce. It would promote nature for local residents and a healthier lifestyle. Even better if planted with old Norfolk species and species getting lost in time. Providing appropriate signage would ensure people knew the trees were there for a reason and were being left for wildlife.

It was noted there was a small community orchard of old species located at Sprowston Recreation Ground.

Ms D Coleman observed that Cozens Hardy Road had previously been lined with trees.

Ben responded that whilst tree lined roads were very pleasant it was highly dependent on how much room was available as highway and safety issues were a consideration.

21/047. SPROWSTON TREE WARDENS (CONTINUED)

The Town Clerk reported he had spoken to the NCC Highways Engineer for Sprowston who had advised that a budget of £1,000 emergency maintenance was required annually for every tree planted in the verge or adjacent to the highway. If the Town Council planted trees in the verge, they could be liable for their maintenance.

Mrs J Leggett thought it was important to obtain a definitive statement from NCC as she had heard there was a species list of approved trees for planting adjacent to the highway.

Mr J H Mallen noted the Town Council was unable to progress any plan until NCC provided more details.

He felt the Town Council could work with NCC who was steering the initiative and responsible for highways to ensure the appropriate, approved species of tree was planted. Council could mitigate as much as possible any problems planting might cause as well as any added liabilities.

Mrs J Leggett reported there might be other avenues of support as Broadland District Council had agreed to plant a tree for each resident. Work had only just started and it was hoped to complete the planning stage during summer ready for autumn planting.

It was Ms D Coleman's opinion that it would be much better managed at parish level and referred to NCC's management of tree planting on the NDR in summer by non-agricultural people, suggesting the Council's Grounds staff were more experienced and groups such as SYEP could be invited to participate.

Ben advised the networks key concerns were for trees not to be planted in areas with ecological significance. He felt this was being overlooked at a national level as emphasis was on planting millions of woodlands and trees, which could destroy valuable habitats.

As a professional ecologist he saw things from a wider environmental view and would encourage people not to think of trees in the usual sense but also as hedgerows. Hedgerows were important for connectivity in the wider landscape and they can often be useful, if not more important than trees.

He recommended if standard trees were not suitable for a roadside and the verge was wide enough it could be left wild with the hedgerow set further back reducing the cutting regime. There were other ways to plant trees without creating woodlands everywhere.

Ms D Coleman asked if there was a process for checking if a tree had a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) such as an app.

Ben was not aware of such a facility at present however, Broadland District Council could advise if a Tree had a TPO. He had personally mapped TPO

21/047. SPROWSTON TREE WARDENS (CONTINUED)

trees in Sprowston and given this information to the Town Clerk, for Councils use, which he understood would be loaded on to Maplink in the future.

He explained that a TPO was placed on trees that were considered in danger not just because they were a beautiful specimen.

Mrs J Leggett asked for Ben's thoughts were on tiny forests.

He could not see why they would not make a positive contribution and be effective in providing stepping stones between habitats. If it was something to be considered in Sprowston it would be worth exploring and he would not rule out anything in terms of green spaces.

Referring to his email Ben confirmed that areas in Harrison's Woodland were being sprayed, including around the bases of trees. Use of weedkillers have an adverse impact on both the pollinators foraging in these areas and soil health.

He also commented on weed killers being used on pavements leeching into the soil and affecting adjacent susceptible plants. Public perception is weeds are undesirable. Whereas, weeds are wild flowers and better for pollinating insects which feed the hedgehogs, birds and bats. Lack of knowledge is what drives the desire for mown green spaces we see everywhere. It would be nice if people could like leggy grassland with all its insects.

It was agreed Mrs J Leggett follow-up on the issue of spraying verges and around tree bases in the woodland.

Mrs J Leggett asked Ben if he would like to attend meetings of the Council or their working groups on a more regular basis to which he confirmed he would as tree warden, and ecologist if Council required advice on that subject as well.

Mr M G Callam enquired if there was anything the Council could do with regard to the adverse impact dogs off leads were having on wildlife in Harrison's Woodland mentioned in Ben's email.

Mrs J Leggett said to do anything formally the Council would need a Byelaw.

The Town Clerk suggested more obvious signage might assist with the situation and reminded Councillors that the woodland was not yet in the Council's ownership.

Ms D Coleman thought a compromise might be to provide dedicated areas where it was mandatory for dogs to be leashed and other areas where they were able to run free.

Councillors thanked Ben thanked for his presentation and report.

21/048. MATTERS ARISING

Play Facilities - Whitehouse Farm

Further to minute 21/039, Mrs J Leggett asked if there was an update on the Whitehouse Farm development and when play equipment would be installed.

The Town Clerk responded that his lead contact at the consortium of developers had left post, the person covering was due leave post in June and there was no named replacement. There continued to be issues with the procurement team and more landscaping works were required on the open space before it could be seeded. Developers appeared to be dragging their heels or not allocating sufficient resources.

There was discussion as to whether Broadland District Council's planning or planning enforcement officers could intervene as this was a requirement of the application when permission was granted for the development.

Mrs J Leggett agreed to pursue with Broadland District Council's planning department.

The Town Clerk reported an invitation for residents to put forward ideas and suggestions for equipment etc. at the proposed skate park had been posted on the Council's Facebook Page.

He would share these with Councillors at a future meeting of the group.

Mr M G Callam had forwarded details of a knowledgeable contact to the Town Clerk.

Mrs J Leggett suggested the group could look at some of the more successful skate parks in Norfolk.

SYEP Urban Garden

Mrs J Leggett gave Ben an overview on SYEP's plans for an urban garden on at Church Lane.

He advised that funding might be available from Natural England who were running a scheme for provision of dedicated wildlife ponds over a certain size.

It was agreed that Ben's contact details be given to the SYEP youth leader.

The Town Clerk confirmed he would be contacting SYEP with details of the Council's decision on their request for a grant.

Councillors thanked Ben for his attendance and he left the meeting.

21/048. MATTERS ARISING (CONTINUED)

Land at North of Salhouse Road

The Town Clerk reported he had sent correspondence as agreed by Council with regard to Land North of Salhouse Road on 27 May 2021 and was awaiting a response.

21/049. SPROWSTON FC AND CRICKET CLUB PROPOSAL

The Town Clerk reported he had received a list of requirements from Gary Howes (Sprowston FC) as follows:

- A full size 3G/4G all-weather pitch with floodlights that would allow all of our teams to train practically and house matches.
- A dedicated elite facility that contains changing rooms, the ability to have floodlights and a matchday cafe; this would allow us to progress as a club.
- An amenity pitch (hub) big enough to house all of our teams (much like Aylsham as discussed) complete with changing rooms and club house.
- Additional pitch space.
- Additional dedicated training space.

Ms D Coleman responded she did not want a sports hub at Barkers Lane which excluded everyone else from using it. When the Beeston Park development is built it would become the only public green space in that area except for a piece of land at the rear of the cemetery susceptible to flooding. Whilst the cricket club was lovely it was a large open space not in use most of the time.

Mr M G Callam expressed his desire to support the football club however, could not justify closing off land available for everyone's use exclusively for football pitches. Although Barkers Lane was originally planned as an open area this did not necessarily mean in perpetuity. Times move on and he would not object to formal sport providing any reduction in space to residents was mitigated by public access to the cricket ground. He questioned if Council were able to support football teams gaining access to some of the facilities at the cricket ground.

Mr J H Mallen did not feel the cricket club would want members of the public playing on their square given the high standard of their game. He thought Barkers Lane could be used for formal games during the football season and available to the public out of season. However, he did not see how the Council could facilitate a hub as there was insufficient land given the wide age range and large number of players.

It was agreed for the Town Clerk to further contact Sprowston FC for their top 10 requirements and the Recreational Facilities Working Group to await further engagement from them.

21/050. PURCHASE OF VIKING PUBLIC HOUSE

Mrs J Leggett remarked that Councillors would like a tour of the property.

Town Clerk to complete a risk assessment before arranging visits.

The Town Clerk reported he had spoken to Jason, Council's Architect and Project Manager, regarding next steps and running costs which, he expected details of the following week. Once received a meeting would be arranged with Cllr. Mallen to discuss funding, expected CIL and phasing. This information would give Jason an idea of the likely budget and enable him to prepare a project plan. To complete this work Jason required Council to decide the build specification they required.

During a debate about funding a number of matters were raised including:

- should development be completed in one or more phases?
- when would there be sufficient funds available for phase one or all phases?
- ideally the project should be funded from CIL receipts without loans
- the Council's application for a loan against CIL receipts was being heard by Broadland District Councils cabinet in two weeks.

Following a discussion on consulting with residents, and whilst it was noted there had been a brief consultation with potential partner groups and some information would be captured in the Recreational Facilities Survey, it was decided to:

- agree revised outline plans from Jason Menezes
- place an article in Sprowston Matters
- undertake a targeted leaflet drop, in the local vicinity
- post on the Council's website
- invite residents to a consultation at the property with displays of outline plans when safe to do so
- include an appeal for volunteers to run a potential community café in all consultation media

Town Clerk to prepare a plan of proposed consultation.

The Town Clerk mentioned he had been in contact with a youth group who were looking for a venue with storage to use on a regular basis. He had also had an informative conversation with Tom Gaskins who ran the Kinder Café on Castle Meadow, a community interest company, about the relationship

21/050. PURCHASE OF VIKING PUBLIC HOUSE (CONTINUED)

between them and landlord of the building, funding streams and what a community café might need from Council as a landlord to help them succeed and community engagement.

Given the lateness of the hour it was agreed to defer items 8 and 9 to the next meeting of the group.

21/051. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 11 June 2021 at 4.00pm, remote meeting by Zoom.