

MENDIP DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Wells Recreation Ground Trust held on Tuesday 24 November 2015 in the Main Hall, Wells Town Hall commencing at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT: Councillor: John North (Chair)
 Councillors Councillor Graham Noel (Portfolio Holder for Services and Corporate Finance), Roy Mackenzie (Ward Member) and Danny Unwin (Ward Member)

OFFICERS

PRESENT: David Clark - Corporate Support Manager
 Claire Dicken - Committee Officer
 Donna Nolan - Corporate Manager, Governance Assets and Public Spaces and Monitoring Officer
 Jane Sharp - Business Development Officer and Lead Officer

Agenda Item Number	Subject	Actioned by
1	<p>Chair's Announcements</p> <p>The Chair requested that mobile phones be turned to silent and explained the evacuation procedures. Hearing aid users were advised to switch to position T.</p> <p>The Chair explained the Council had experienced a problem with its postal service which meant that its notification letters about the first consultation day had been delayed. It had therefore been necessary to hold an additional consultation day.</p>	
2	<p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Councillors John Osman (Ward Member), Harvey Siggs (Leader of Mendip District Council) and Nigel Taylor (Vice Chair and Joint Portfolio Holder for Services and Corporate Finance),</p>	
3	<p>Declarations on Interest</p> <p>None</p>	
4	<p>Public Participation</p> <p>a. Items on the Agenda</p> <p>Jo Brown was invited to speak about item 6 Play Area Location and Preferred Scheme. She thanked the Officers for all the work they had carried out in connection with the project. However, she said that there had been strong opposition to the development of a play area on the recreation ground since the project began. She understood the decision to develop the ground was pre-determined and therefore recent consultations were a farce as far as she could see. She said she</p>	

understood that the Chairman had already stated that he would only support option 1 and would resign if any other option was decided. She asked that the Chairman declare that he had pre-determined the decision and leave the meeting. In fact she believed that paragraph 22b of the Wells Recreation Ground Trust Regulations compromised the interests of all of the Trustees.

The Chairman thanked her for her speech. He explained that recently consultations had taken place in response to public opinion regarding the previous consultation process. He declared that he had not pre-determined the decision nor had he declared he would resign from the Trust on the basis of any decision taken.

The Chairman of the Committee adjourned the meeting in order for the Corporate Manager, Governance, Assets and Public Spaces to meet and discuss the legal position with Jo Brown and Alex Kolombos the Chairman of the Trust's Advisory Group, outside of the meeting.

The meeting reconvened.

The Chairman of the Committee said that he had taken legal advice and declared that he had not pre-determined any decision to develop the play area on the recreation ground. He had an open mind and would listen carefully to the arguments and options that were put before Members.

Jo Brown was invited to speak again. She was strongly opposed to moving the play area onto the playing field because she felt it would spoil the serene majesty of the open green space. She questioned the worth of relocating the play area to free up the setting of the Bishop's Barn, when the business case showed that a refurbished barn would result in very little extra income. She said there was no need to develop the playing field when option 2, the current location, was perfectly acceptable. It was important that the right decision is made. She said she did not want to see the recreation ground becoming a car park when events were on and she was further concerned about traffic congestion in Silver Street. She said that the development of the area should not be made by stealth, just because funding was available.

The Chairman thanked the speaker for her contribution.

Kirstie Harris was invited to speak on behalf of Better Play Areas for Wells. She outlined their involvement in previous consultations on the future of the rec and options for the play area. They supported option 1 for several reasons. It fulfilled a condition of the Mendip Play Strategy of providing each town with a strategic town-wide playground. It would provide an open and more play space and would only take 9% of the recreation field leaving plenty of space for all the current user groups. For safeguarding reasons it was not desirable for public toilets to be within a play area. She pointed out that there was other support for option 1 including that of Officers of Mendip District Council, the current Advisory Group and the Bishop's Palace. With regard to parking neither the Bishop's Palace or Cathedral have dedicated parking, our wish is

	<p>people walk or cycle to the play area.</p> <p>Bill MacKay was invited to speak. He outlined the history of the recreation ground and its original purpose as a gift to the city. He said that he started from a neutral base. The current recreation ground was a rare piece of open space and it would be a shame to build on it. With regard to car parking he said other Wells attractions had no dedicated parking and that there were 13 car parking spaces for events at the Barn on the Silver Street side. With regard to the consultation he noted that the public opinion supporting options 1 and 2 were almost 50:50 and wondered if there had been adequate consultation. He said he would welcome up-to-date play equipment for children in the city. However, he said there was no clear-cut winner. He urged the Members to make the right decision for the people of Wells bearing in mind the importance of the site.</p> <p>The Chair thanked all of the public speakers for their contributions.</p> <p>b. Items not the Agenda None</p>	
5	<p>Previous Minutes</p> <p>The previous minutes of 9 September 2015 were approved.</p>	Claire Dicken
6	<p>Play Area Location and Preferred Scheme</p> <p>The Chairman had given time for Members to read the item 6 report Play Area Location and Preferred Scheme which had been circulated at the meeting.</p> <p>The report sought a decision on the preferred supplier and location of the new play area at the Wells Recreation Ground and outlined the next steps for delivering the scheme.</p> <p>The Corporate Manager, Governance, Assets and Public Spaces presented the report. She started by saying that there were two important decisions to be made; these were the location of the play area and the preferred supplier.</p> <p>On considering the context of the recreation ground, the Mendip Play Strategy had identified it as a central and accessible location, with a significant catchment area of potential play users from across the city.</p> <p>The Corporate Manager, Governance, Assets and Public Spaces explained that the site was eligible for Section 106 monies. The cost of the play area would largely be met by Section 106 money.</p> <p>Officers had been asked to carry out further public consultation and a procurement exercise. The results of these had been set out in the report.</p>	Jane Sharp

The Chairman then allowed Members of the public to speak. They raised queries about whether the play area might be better placed in the Blue School playing fields. Others felt a play area for small children would not be best placed next to the football pitch as there was a danger of being hit by footballs.

The Corporate Manager, Governance, Assets and Public Spaces went on to outline the results of the public consultation as well as the procurement assessment.

In summary, 56% of people preferred the playing field location whereas 46% of people preferred the current location.

The report therefore recommended that play area be relocated to the playing field.

During the discussion that followed Members thanked the Officers for the work they had done towards the project.

Two of the Members said they were relatively new to the Trust and had no preconceived opinions about the site. However, they said that having visited the site and spoken to many local people they supported the relocation of the play area to the playing field. They were keen that the Barn should be well used and not fall into disrepair and they were satisfied that the playing field could accommodate the play area and other activities.

Another Member stressed that the needs of children should be put first.

The Chairman said that he could see both the positive and the negative merits of each location. However, the prime concern was that children had somewhere safe to play.

A proposal that the play area be relocated to the playing field was carried by 4 votes to 0 votes.

The Corporate Manager, Governance, Assets and Public Spaces went on to talk about the preferred supplier. She said the consultation had resulted in a strong preference for Eibe as a supplier of play equipment. 95% of people liked their Bishop's Palace themed schemes.

During the discussion that followed a proposal to agree that Eibe be the preferred supplier was carried by 4 votes to 0 votes.

The Business Development Officer outlined there was an option for an outdoor gym circuit and that play suppliers had confirmed there was a new Regulation requiring play and gym equipment to be at least 15 metres apart. The Unique Insight Group had suggested a site beside the bowling green.

During the discussion that followed Members had concerns that the suggested location of the gym was too close to existing dwellings.

	<p>However, Members noted the recommendation of Officers that gym equipment would be an asset to the residents of Wells.</p> <p>The Corporate Manager, Governance Assets and Public Spaces confirmed that the gym equipment was an optional extra to the play area scheme. The decision was whether the outdoor gym circuit is included in the scheme or not.</p> <p>Councillor Danny Unwin proposed that the gym equipment be included in the scheme. Councillor John North seconded the proposal.</p> <p>There was public concern that the gym equipment would be too close to the residents of Carlton Mews.</p> <p>Members agreed to delegate authority to Officers to liaise with the preferred play supplier son options for where the gym equipment could be best placed. Members requested that a report, outlining the options be brought back to the next meeting of the Committee.</p> <p>Members agreed that the Council, on behalf of the Trust, should secure planning permission and funding for the play area.</p> <p>Also it was agreed that the Wells Recreation Ground Trust should place an order with the preferred supplier to manufacture, deliver and install the new play area. This would happen only when planning permission was in place and funding was secured.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>To agree the preferred supplier as Eibe and location as the playing field.</p> <p>To delegate authority to Officers to liaise with the preferred play supplier on options for where the gym equipment could be best placed and bring a report back to the next Trust meeting.</p> <p>That the Council, on behalf of the Trust secures planning permission and funding for the play area.</p> <p>To agree that the Wells Recreation Ground Trust place an order with the preferred supplier to manufacture, deliver and install the new play area. This would happen only when planning permission was in place and funding was secured.</p>	
7	<p>Changing the Governance Update</p> <p>The Corporate Manager, Governance Assets and Public Spaces explained that Veale Wasborough and Vizards (VWV) had advised that due to the public interest in the Trust, the Charity Commission had asked VWV to give public notice of the Charity Commission Scheme so that anyone wanting to do so could make representations on the draft Scheme. The notice period is one month and this ends on 1 December</p>	Jane Sharp

	<p>2015. Thus it was advised that decisions regarding asset transfers could not be taken by the Cabinet or Council until the New Year.</p> <p>It was therefore expected that any decisions in respect of the asset transfer would be made in the New Year.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>That the advice from VWV be adopted.</p>	
8	<p>Financial Update</p> <p>The Wells Recreation Ground Trust Committee had requested financial updates be provided at each meeting. The report showed the income and expenditure figures at the end of October 2015.</p> <p>The figures indicated a deficit for the current year due to the legal work being undertaken to progress the new governance model.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>To note the financial position of the trust as set out in the report.</p>	Adam Savery
9	<p>Advisory Group Update</p> <p>The Business Development Officer explained that since the last meeting the Advisory Group had continued to input into the legal paperwork and were producing a business plan for the new Trust. There would be a report at the next meeting.</p> <p>Alex Kolombus, Chairman of the Advisory Group said they the Members of the Group were disappointed that they were experiencing delays in the transfer of the assets.</p> <p>In response to queries about how the public would find out about the Advisory Group and minutes of their meetings, he said that they planned to have their own website and that minutes of the Group meeting would be posted there in due course.</p>	
10	<p>Urgent Business</p> <p>None</p>	

The meeting closed at approximately 8.10 pm