

SHREWSBURY TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of the Recreation & Leisure Committee Held Virtually on Microsoft Teams At 6.00pm on Wednesday 30 September 2020

PRESENT

Councillors K Pardy (Chair), Mrs G Burgess, J Dean, N Green, Mrs K Halliday, I Jones, Mrs P Moseley, K Roberts & D Vasmer.

IN ATTENDANCE

Helen Ball (Town Clerk), Amanda Spencer (Deputy Town Clerk), Gary Farmer (Operations Manager), Stuart Farmer (Projects Manager), Matt Wilcoxon (Countryside & Greenspace Manager) & Ruth Jones (Office Manager)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Ms J Mackenzie, Mrs B Wall & Mike Cox (Outdoor Recreation & Asset Manager).

01/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (PECUNIARY & NON-PECUNIARY) IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Shropshire Councillors	Those twin-hatted members declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the Town Council's relationship with Shropshire Council.
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02/20 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 5 February 2020 were submitted as circulated and read.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Recreation & Leisure Committee meeting held on 5 February 2020 be approved and signed as a correct record.

03/20 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

73/19 – Church Road Recreation Ground – The Chairman sought clarification on the position of the Glebefield at Meole. The Town Clerk had been in contact with the Trinity Church recently to suggest starting discussions about linkages between the Glebefield and Church Road Recreation Ground and was waiting for them to come back with some dates.

77/19 – Shropshire Place Plan – The Town Clerk reported that due to workload created by COVID she had not yet progressed organising workshops for members but would endeavour to do so.

04/20 WILDFLOWER MEADOWS

The meeting was joined by Matt Wilcoxon, Countryside & Greenspace Manager who gave a presentation on options for grass verge management.

The big picture was the rapid decline in species, soil depletion and climate change. 97% of wild flower meadows were lost in the last 100 years and poor management across the UK had caused a drop in diversity. Public opinion was polarised but was increasingly supportive of wildlife friendly management. Most of the areas being considered were Shropshire Council land so it would be necessary to seek their permission to carry out work, as well as road verges, areas between nature reserves and sports facilities were suitable.

There were five options for verge management:

1. Short mown grass – c. 7 cuts a year
2. Native wildflower seeding – edge of nature reserves
3. Horticultural wildflower seeding
4. One cut per year – lighter grasses
5. Left long – not cut at all – light grasses but can also overgrow be brambles etc

Pros & cons

- Wildflower seeding to save money is a bit of a myth
- May save money on flower beds and roundabouts vs traditional planting
- The real cost, wildlife and carbon benefit comes from reduced cutting
- Changes in management have implications for staff allocations and workload throughout year

Suggestions for areas which can have once per year cuts or other management

- Battlefield roundabout
- Robertson Way
- Shelton Traffic lights
- Meole Brace roundabout
- Entrances to the town that have high impact

There had been positive feedback from the areas already planted this year.

Good signage to keep the public informed was seen as really helpful along with regular updates on social media and in the Press. The Countryside & Greenspace Manager was looking for Councillors and the public for ideas about their local areas.

Councillor Jones expressed that he was in favour of long grass verges but asked if litter picking would be included in costings and whether litter could be removed before mowing in the future.

The Countryside & Greenspace Manager confirmed that litter picking was undertaken by Shropshire Council's contractor. Often it was hard for the operatives to see the litter until after the cut. Fly-tipping of larger items also posed a problem as operatives had to contact Shropshire Council to request them to remove it.

Councillor Vasmer reported that he had received positive comments about the wildflower planting on Robertson Way. There seemed a big price difference between native and wildflower and he supported concentrating on native.

The Countryside & Greenspace Manager said that although cheaper, the native mix had a shorter flowering time and was prone to becoming lanky over time whereas the wildflower mix used on Robertson Way had bloomed for longer.

Councillor Halliday asked whether there was any scope for community projects and/or joint funding ventures within the Belle Vue Ward. The Countryside & Greenspace Manager advised that this would depend on the location; if for example it was part of the Highway, permission would need to be sought from Highways would as there is a requirement for Public Liability Cover and set Training to work on the highway.

Councillor Pardy raised the perennial issue of parking on grass verges, his ward in particular is blighted by this activity. The Countryside & Greenspace Manager reported on the difficulties the mowers face with parking and also the resultant rutting of the surfacing. Wildflower meadows might go some way to addressing that.

Councillor Roberts suggested that the Council should look at larger, more wow-factor locations rather than small pockets as they could be enjoyed by more people.

The Countryside & Greenspace Manager concluded with his intention to look at 4 key locations with potentially 4 different mix of wildflowers to add variety. He also intended to look at strategic locations to reduce intensity of management of verges to create more habitat diversity whilst still undertaking edge management to keep areas tidy. He would report back in due course.

05/20 UPDATE ON RECREATIONAL ASSETS, THEIR USE & MAINTENANCE IN LIGHT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Members received an update report prepared by the Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager into the Council's Recreational Assets, including how they were being used and the maintenance regimes in light of the current crisis and the various Government Guidelines Officers were working to. The Town Council currently had a ban on non-sporting activities on Council land that may attract mass gatherings. Any activity must follow the COVID 19 Secure Safer Public Spaces – Urban Centres and Green Spaces Guidelines.

The Quarry currently had a high number of visitors using the grass areas as a safe haven and allowing them to maintain social distancing whilst staying within family groups. It was felt that to allow an event to take over a large portion of the Quarry, would restrict where residents could sit and therefore increase the risk of possible virus transmission and complaints. All events for 2020 had been cancelled, with requests for bouncy castles, children's parties and people performing on the bandstand also being declined as it was not possible to guarantee social distancing or prevent mass gatherings.

The Police were paying regular visits to the Quarry to check guidelines were being complied with. Trading Standards and Public Protection were also monitoring social media for advertised events to assist with preventing them from happening.

The Café and canoe hire were now in operation again subject to compliance with guidelines and they themselves completing a COVID Risk Assessment and making adjustments to the way they operated, including barriers, hand sanitising, one way systems and ensuring queues did not block walkways.

Earlier in the year problems were encountered with litter in the Quarry but this had diminished and continued to be monitored. This had caused issues not only with the vast quantities of litter but also other anti-social behaviour.

Certain sports were now able to be hosted again providing a copy of the Governing Body Covid 19 Secure Guidelines, Covid 19 Risk Assessment and Track and Trace was in place. This included no car sharing, sanitiser being available, no use of changing rooms, no sharing equipment, any touch points being regularly disinfected, social distancing maintained and own first aid kits provided etc.

Monkmoor Recreation Ground was up and running with 94 % of the hours available on the Astro turf being utilised, however six hours was being utilised out of core hours via the key scheme or youth provision.

Tennis had proven to be extremely popular assisted by the Key scheme fees waived this year. Details of applicants for the grass courts had been retained so it was hoped to see an increase in fee paying players for next year.

Croquet and Bowling Clubs were complying with their governing bodies Guidelines but due to number restrictions little use was being made of either. Grounds staff had extended their season.

Sunday League football was to resume at the end of September, subject to all the necessary guidance being followed. Teams using the sites would not be able to access changing rooms, however access would be granted to the disabled toilet facilities only.

Frankwell had been up and running and had been busy with canoeing, cricket, ladies cricket and junior cricket development and activities. Coaching was restricted to five youngsters to one coach and spread out to maintain social distancing.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Report be noted

06/20 FOOTFALL

The Project Manager reported that during the early stages of lockdown, visitor numbers had dropped off but since the easing of restrictions numbers had slowly started to pick up to expected averages

Visitor numbers within the Quarry had recovered to track along the same numbers as non-event days of 2019. Due to tweaking of the system after install in 2019, comparable figures for 2019 were not available for the Market Hall, but it had seen a steady increase in footfall since the reopening of the non-essential stores. Likewise the Square saw a steady increase of visitors.

Geo-sensing had proved exceptionally useful during COVID. It had allowed the Town Council to understand footfall levels in key areas and of late how the Town was recovering from full lockdown. The fact that geo-sensing tracked both new and existing users enabled plotting how many visitors could be seen in specific areas.

Officers were having discussions with senior officers at Shropshire Council about the potential of expanding the scheme and sharing the data to create one single desktop as the use of technology became more important.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Report be noted.

07/20 MARKETS

Members received an update report prepared by the Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager. During the early stages of the lockdown, the market had been closed except for essential items only, subject to compliance with guidelines and restrictions on the number of customers allowed to enter. The traders had all worked together delivering their own orders and this became so busy, that deliveries had to be restricted to a specific number each day to ensure they could cope with demand.

The Market was now fully open with restrictions in place for eateries and social distancing. Each trader had to complete a COVID risk assessment and make the necessary adjustments to protect themselves, staff and customers. This has been challenging as guidelines were changing on a weekly basis and on occasions only giving three days' notice for adaptations to be implemented which meant signage and banners containing specific instructions were out of date and needed amending at additional cost. The building had been visited by police and public protection to ensure compliance with current guidelines. To date, the Market was 100% utilised

RECOMMENDED:

That the Report be noted.

08/20 PLAY

The Operations Manager reported that each year, subject to Council approval, play provision on Council land was upgraded and improvements undertaken and since 2009 many facilities had been totally refurbished. As a result of the annual ROSPA inspections & Councillor requests, Officers had identified a number of facilities that required improvements as they had not been upgraded since the formation of Shrewsbury Town Council in 2009.

Upton Lane Recreation Ground – required a total refurbishment of the safety surfacing, fencing and possible relocation. The choice of the play equipment would be subject to consultation and may require two separate areas for toddlers/juniors and more demanding equipment for teenagers through consultation with Youth Services.

Consideration should be given to front-funding from 106 developer contributions, to include a new play area, BMX track and improved access paths.

Mary Webb Road – Total refurbishment, removal of security fencing, new surfacing and play equipment, subject to Councillor consultation with the local community.

The fencing, whilst in reasonable condition and secure, was uninviting for a children's play area and the one gate did not meet RoSPA recommendations. Two self-closing gates were required and new 1.2m bow top steel fencing to at least one/two sides of the play area.

Kynaston Road Recreation Ground – Skateboard Ramp – Replace with new ramp subject to consultation with skateboard enthusiasts. RoSPA had identified large areas of corrosion, high risk where the transition between ramp and tarmac is too large and attempts at repair had proved unsuccessful. There were items which no longer met the relevant safety standards and RoSPA had identified as high risk.

Kynaston Road Toddlers Play Area – Additional drainage to prevent further flooding of half the play equipment. Replacement multi-unit and re wet pore the surface.

The multi play unit could be replaced with a modern unit but RoSPA had not identified the condition to be of immediate concern and to do this would require the complete replacement of the wet pour safety surfacing.

Green Acres Recreation Ground – Replace multiplayer unit and upgrade spring rockers.

Members made the following comments:

Councillor Vasmer stressed the importance of having good play areas throughout the town and was pleased with the work that was being done and fully supported the proposals.

Councillor Burgess said she was keen to be involved and residents would welcome the plans for Mary Webb. She thanked the Operations Manager for the work that had been done so far.

Councillor Jones expressed his concerns at the condition of the ramps at Kynaston Road, particularly following the closure of the Flaxivity. He was aware of the long standing issues of flooding of the Toddler play area.

Councillor Mrs Moseley thanked the Operations Manager for the work that had been done at Upton Lane and reiterated the need for work to be carried out on the BMX track and the play area. She welcomed consultation with other users of the park.

The Town Clerk reported that commuted sums for Upton Lane equated to around £120k but funds would not be received until various occupancy triggers had been achieved which would mean a delay in progressing with the project.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) That the Report be noted**

- (ii) That the following facilities be prioritised for upgrade and included in the 2021/22 Capital Programme**
 - a. Upton Lane play area and BMX Track**
 - b. Mary Webb Road play area including the removal of the palisade security fence**
 - c. Kynaston Road Recreation Ground replacement Skateboard Ramp subject to consultation with Youth Services and the local users**
 - d. Kynaston Road Recreation Ground Infant play area including field drainage to prevent surface flooding**
 - e. Green Acres Recreation Ground, upgrade multi play unit and springy rockers.**

- (iii) That the funding of the Upton Lane play facilities be made ahead of offsite play contributions in line with planning approval being received.**

09/20 FISHERIES

Members received an update report prepared by the Outdoor Recreation & Assets Manager. Angling was one of the first sports to resume after lockdown. Much of the maintenance work that would normally be done in the Winter period had to wait until restrictions were eased and was now being completed, ready for the first competitions to be hosted, subject to complying with national guidelines and COVID Risk Assessments.

The bulk of the work had been completed at Oxon Pool with some assistance from the neighbouring touring park. Membership for that water was at 30 members with a ceiling of around 45. Major works at Mousecroft Pool were now completed albeit later than originally intended. This facility had now become more user friendly for dog walkers, anglers and visitors to the site, with car parking in the area regularly full of visitors. There were still some pegs to be replaced on the site. New fishing pegs had been installed at Frankwell and all had been prepared for the forthcoming competition. A £5,000 grant had been awarded from the Environment Agency for the installation of new pegs at Monkmoor. These should be completed by the end of October. Sydney Avenue was having old pegs replaced and these should all be completed for the start of next season.

Junior Development had commenced with equipment being given to youngsters and coaching 1 to 1 and it was anticipated to commence an academy once restrictions eased and this would be sponsored by national tackle providers.

Competitions were currently being arranged but these would be subject to national Guidelines and local conditions.

Up to the end of August the number of permits sold was 791 compared to 250 prior to the new management of the waters. The number of Junior permits was 86 and 800 day tickets had been purchased so far this season.

All purchases and bookings were now done online and this appeared to have had a major positive impact on the operation as bookings and payments could be made anywhere in the country and with the likes of Oxon Pool, specific pegs reserved for specific dates. This also made it easier to police waters and had removed the need for the bailiffs to handle cash.

The Town Clerk reported that fisheries were doing really well since the Council had taken on the management. There was an excellent relationship with the Environment Agency, the Angling Trust and the Shropshire Wildlife Trust and through Young Shrewsbury there had been a concerted effort to encourage young people. They were also working with suppliers to help provide equipment to young anglers.

RESOLVED

That the Report be noted.

10/20 TEAM SHREWSBURY

The Operations Manager reported that tactical meetings had resumed virtually on a monthly basis and weekly meetings were due to commence once some IT issues had been resolved. Shrewsbury had retained its Purple Flag status for a thriving evening and night-time economy.

He reported that the Town Centre Police Station was closing in mid-November and all Officers would be based from Monkmoor which would reduce the response times for Town Centre issues i.e thefts, ASB, drug dealing etc. Members were asked to consider the implications of this.

Members were asked to note some upcoming dates and details of these could be found on websites or through partners. There would be events taking place w/c 5th October which would incorporate World Mental Health Day on 8th October & World Homelessness Day on 10th October. There would be exhibitions arranged around the Town and details would be posted on social media.

West Mercia PCC were funding a two-hour training session on Exploitation & Vulnerability which was available to all Shrewsbury restaurants, café, shops etc, around recognising the signs of CSE/CE & County Lines.

West Mercia Police were working with University Centre Shrewsbury for student volunteers. This offered an excellent opportunity for students to gain valuable experience by volunteering to work with SNT assisting the team with events, sharing messages re river safety, CSE, CE and modern slavery during the mobile police station surgeries.

Bowbrook Estate at Radbrook were requesting that the Council considered the Smartwater initiative due to an increase in burglaries. The PCC were currently offering a 25% contribution towards Smartwater and free of charge signage increasing the 'We Don't Buy Crime' message. There was a minimum order of 80% of an area required to achieve the 25% discount. The costs per household was £6.80.

Cllr Roberts had been pleased to see that the community had set up a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme which he was supportive of as it provided eyes and ears to the police. In terms of Smartwater, his view was that if it were provided for one resident in a ward there should be the expectation that every resident should have access. He gave examples of where it had worked well in the rural areas. He believed that the Town Council should expend any resource on setting up and retaining Neighbourhood Watch Schemes.

Councillor Pardy reported that the Sundorne area had been badly affected by arson, theft and damage to cars this summer. He had sought help from the Police and they had suggested Neighbourhood Watch and Smartwater.

General comments had included:

- Neighbourhood Watch Schemes had been popular at one stage and the fact that signage had been installed had helped to reduce crime. They had been in decline of late.
- There should be a strict rationale for any allocation of funding towards Smartwater.
- Members were aware of <https://wedontbuycrime.co.uk/contact/>

Councillor Green asked that Team Shrewsbury be thanked for continuing to do an excellent job during the current difficult circumstances. He felt the loss of the Town Centre Police Station would undoubtedly have a negative effect on policing within the town and he suggested the Town Council make a representation. Members agreed and proposed that the Town Clerk be asked to write to the PCC to express the Council's concerns at the closure of the Riverside Police Station.

RECOMMENDED:

(i) That the Report be noted.

(ii) That the Town Clerk write to the PCC to express the Council's concerns at the closure of the Town Centre Police Station.

(iii) That the matter of financing Smartwater be referred to the Finance & General Purposes Committee but it be noted that the Recreation & Leisure Committee have some reservations about funding the Smartwater initiative and needed to consider this further alongside Neighbourhood Watch schemes.

11/20 SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL LEISURE STRATEGY

Members were in receipt of the Shropshire Council Leisure Strategy <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/get-involved/leisure-facilities-strategy/> They asked that the Town Clerk draft and circulate a response ahead of the mid October deadline.

RESOLVED:

That The Town Clerk draft and circulate a response to the Shropshire Council Leisure Strategy.

12/20 CHRISTMAS

The Town Clerk updated members on the plans for Christmas. Members would recall that the Committee determined the Christmas Lighting Tender earlier in the year. Whilst COVID affected production at the Turnocks manufacturing unit, it was hoped that as many of the new cross street displays would be available. Where not some of last year's displays would be utilised and revised costings had been received to reflect these changes.

Switch on had originally been scheduled for Wednesday 25th November. The decision had been made collectively between the three organisers (STC, BID and Shopping Centre) that this should not go ahead but that the lights would be switched on in and around that time. Instead options were being explored to look at activities that encouraged people to visit the town and dwell but not create gatherings. Funding had been secured through the Shrewsbury Recovery Task Force to develop these options.

Carols in the Square had also been cancelled due to the likelihood of creating mass gatherings. Instead My Shrewsbury, Shropshire Festivals and BBC Radio Shropshire were looking to broadcast a 30 minute doorstep carol service across the county.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Report be noted.**
- (ii) That the Town Clerk be given authority to determine the nature and scale of any Christmas activity in line with national and local guidelines at the time.**

13/20 REMEMBRANCE

The Town Clerk reported on plans for Remembrance Sunday which was scheduled for Sunday 8th November 2020. Ordinarily the Town Council would act as lead organiser working with RAF Shawbury (on behalf of the military) and St Chads, linking with the Police and the Safety Advisory Group.

Initial discussions had taken place to work through Battle of Britain Service and then onto Remembrance. Battle of Britain Service was a low-key event with minimal number of personnel and only the Mayor, High Sheriff and the Station Commander laying wreaths. The event was given minimal publicity to reduce the number of people present and Facebook Live was used to stream the event.

Since this time the Rule of 6 had been introduced restricting social gatherings of 6 or more and discussions were taking place with Public Health to understand the implications.

In all likelihood if the event were able to take place it would only be a wreath laying service rather than the usual large parade and service which attracts thousands of spectators.

Contact had been made with Microvideo who annually stream the Church Service in the Quarry to understand the potential of streaming a virtual Remembrance Event similar to the event they do for Carols in the Square.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Report be noted.**
- (ii) That the Town Clerk be given authority to determine the nature and scale of any event in line with national and local guidelines at the time.**

14/20 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Town Clerk updated members on the Capital Programme.

Projects that had been completed during lockdown included:

- Boiler work at Grange Youth Centre
- BMX upgrades at Meole & Harlescott
- Footpaths & cycleways Tranche 1 – Old River Bed, Monkmoor Community Woodland & Springfield Recreation Ground
- Resurfacing work at Mardol Quay
- Street lights LED replacement
- Installation of solar lights in the Quarry

The Town Clerk commended the work of Stuart Farmer the Projects Manager who had been instrumental in the delivery of these projects.

Projects that were being progressed further included:

- Footpaths & cycleways Tranche 2 – Reabrook, Mousecroft, Hillside, Old Shrewsbury Canal
- Monkmoor River Bank – tender awarded.
- Ash die back – risk assessment of tree provision and development of an Action Plan for removal and restoration.
- Climate Emergency – A Climate Emergency Working Group were now meeting on a regular basis and developing an Action Plan.
- Completion of Sweetlake play area.
- A number of other projects were well on track to progress with tenders about to be awarded.
- Toilets – That the planned refurbishment of toilets should be reviewed in light of COVID and consideration be given to the provision of single access cubicles.

The Committee were in agreement that further discussions take place on those items in the Capital Programme flagged for review in light of COVID. Councillor Halliday requested that the refurbishment of the toilets be discussed as a separate item at a future meeting.

The Committee also had extensive discussions about play areas and the prioritisation for refurbishment of existing facilities.

The Committee agreed on the following priority areas

- Upton Lane play area and BMX Track
- Mary Webb Road play area including the removal of the palisade security fence
- Kynaston Road Recreation Ground replacement Skateboard Ramp subject to consultation with Youth Services and the local users
- Kynaston Road Recreation Ground Infant play area including field drainage to prevent surface flooding
- Green Acres Recreation Ground, upgrade multi play unit and springy rockers.

Councillor Pardy commended the staff for all their work particularly during this difficult time.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) **That the report be noted;**
- (ii) **That the refurbishment of toilets be discussed in more detail at a future meeting.**

15/20 COMMUTED SUMS

- (i) The Town Clerk updated members on developer sites, many of which were nearing completion.
 - a) **Copthorne Barracks Play and Open Space** – offsite contributions to play and open space – awaiting progress with Pavilion Extension & confirmation of drawdown of Commuted Sums from the planning authority
 - b) **Barratt Homes/Bovis Homes – Mytton Oak Road** – scheduled adoption Autumn 2020 – costing for snagging list agreed by developers, awaiting slight amendments to plan and sign-off
 - c) **Shrewsbury South Urban** - Sutton Grange site – ongoing – likely transfer in 2021
 - d) **Shrewsbury South Urban** Bellway Homes site – discussion on land adoption and adoption of acoustic fencing
 - e) **Shrewsbury South Urban** Galliers site – early discussions on land adoption
 - f) **Shrewsbury South Urban** Community Centre – location on the site

- g) **Ingleby Way** – Adoption & Maintenance of open space – now ready following clarification of hedgerow ownership – awaiting confirmation of title from developer’s solicitor
- h) **Holgate Drive** – Adoption & Maintenance of open space - awaiting completion of snagging– paperwork signed;
- i) **Belvidere Paddocks/Hillside Drive** – Adoption & Maintenance of open space – ready awaiting transfer– paperwork signed. See report from the Ward Member
- j) **Arlington Way** – Adoption & Maintenance of open space – Land transferred – awaiting £60k transfer S106 money from Shropshire Council
- k) **Sweetlake** – Development of play area and future adoption of open space – Play Area currently in construction. Developer working through snagging list. Legal teams in discussions
- l) **Crowmoor House** – s106 agreement for offsite play & open space contribution to be used for Upton Lane & Monkmoor Recreation Ground – two-staged payments on trigger on percentage occupied properties. Council may need to bankroll work at Upton Lane Recreation Ground given the priority status of the play area in this location

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

(ii) Belvedere Paddocks Hillside Drive

Prior to the meeting members had received a report updating them of the current situation regarding an area of public open space within the recent development of 25 houses at Hillside Drive, Monkmoor. Galliers, the developers of the site had agreed to transfer the ownership and the responsibility for future maintenance to the Town Council. Due to the protracted nature of legalities, this had still to be finalised, however, there was no doubt that the Council would be responsible for looking after this site.

With differing views put forward about the site, the local Member, Councillor Pam Moseley and the STC Countryside Greenspace Manager had agreed that it would be appropriate to consult with residents of Hillside Drive (of both older and newer houses) to seek residents’ views on how the land should be managed in the future.

Thirteen responses had been received, eleven from residents of the newer homes, and two from the older houses. The responses covered a wide range of opinion on the land, and some also touched on other related issues. Some residents were strongly in favour of managing the site for play, with others against the idea, preferring a more “wild” appearance for the land

With the breadth of opinion expressed, it would not be possible to find a solution which would satisfy every resident, however, a compromise could be identified. The proposal put forward in the consultation was for a wildlife-friendly to amenity mowing ratio of

80:20. The Countryside and Greenspace Manager was of the opinion that there could be a shift in the proportions between the two types of maintenance; but whatever the Committee decide in this regard, if there was to be a mix of mowing regimes, the areas left in a natural condition should border the properties immediately adjacent to the site, and the closer mown area should be in a more central part of the site, and include access to the footpath to the river. He stated that an annual mow of the wild areas would be sufficient. The closer mown area would be cut by a batwing mower (the type which cuts the verges).

Members were therefore requested to determine how this piece of public open space should be maintained by the Council in the future. This could be to leave the land as a wild area, have the land as part wild/part mown (and in what proportions), or to mow the site in its entirety.

RESOLVED:

That a final decision on how the land should be managed be made once the land had transferred to the Town Council, but that the Countryside & Greenspace Manager work with the ward member to determine future maintenance whilst working within the parameters of the current planning conditions.