

Village Green Working Group Meeting 21 February 2017

Participants:

- Jim Donahue – PC – WG Chair
- Cormac Neeson of the cricket club
- Gill Goodwin – WOTHabs representative
- Gavin Jones - Whitchurch primary school sports teacher
- Alistair Aitchison of the football club
- Keith Brooks – PC Chairman

Agenda:

- Working Parties
- Pavilion/ Village Hall way forward
- Pending proposal for basketball net/ skateboard ramp on the VG
- Progress on OCC/Whitchurch Primary school agreement with Parish Council
- Proposal for a memorial tree
- Trimming of Oak tree by mound/batting cages
- Other open issues from previous meetings
- AOB

Working Parties

Working group members reflected on the success of the August Bank Holiday working party and agreed that there should generally be at least two working parties a year; one in the Spring and one on the Autumn.

Cormac said that the CC was planning to have their annual working party in mid-March ahead of the season. They usually focus on repairing and preparing the pavilion for the season, but would be happy to take on other tasks if people provide a list of things that need doing.

Gill from WOTHabs reminded WG member of the recommended timetables for cutting the hedges, which is outside the scope of the grass-cutting contract so volunteers are needed. The timing in the checklist could drive the timing for other working parties:

Description of area	Planned tasks	When to be done	Proposed Working Party
Laurel hedging at car park entrance	Trim top and sides to keep to reasonable and manageable dimensions.	Once a year, in late spring or early summer.	May Working Party
Deciduous mixed hedge on eastern boundary of car	Trim top and sides to fence height. Forward-	Once a year, in dormant period Dec- early March	March CC Working Party

park and to north of Little Croft	growing shoots cut back to 1m for neat profile.		
Holly hedge at western and northern boundary of car park	Trim top and sides to fence height	Once a year, in April-May.	May Working Party
Outfield on northern boundary	Cut back brambles, nettles and any invasive scrub	Once a year, late autumn	October Working Party

Based on this there should be another working party in May which could include members of WOTHabs, the Football Club and the school, plus the general public could participate in, and probably another one in October.

Village Grass Cutting Contract

The village grass-cutting contract is being sent out to tender as Jon Steward has elected not to continue mowing the village grass this year.

The specification will be sent out for at least 3 bids. The contract is similar in scope to previous contracts. The Village Green will be mowed 2 x per month. Last year there was a fast growing season in the Spring and more frequent cuts were requested. The Parish Council's view is that it should stay at 2 x per month as weekly cuts would drive the cost up considerably, however the contracts will have options for additional cuts upon request if needed. In addition, it was suggested that the CC and FC could mow their areas more frequently using volunteers from their clubs if they decided it was needed.

The existing VG WG Checklist will apply that includes the guidelines originally developed by WOTHabs. The PC will ask for an option to have the grass clipping picked-up and put in one or compost heaps, but the cost for this is not known at this point.

Gavin suggested that the grass cutting supplier the school uses should be considered as they have had a good experience with them. Gavin has forwarded their details to the Council.

Pavilion/ Village Hall way forward

Cllr Donahue explained the situation behind the decision not to sell the Village hall and have it relocated to the Village Green. The decision is linked to the likelihood that SODC would redevelop the Village Hall for housing if the PC sold the site, taking the option they have on first right to purchase the land from the PC until 2016. This means that funds from sale of the land would not be available

to fund a new Village Hall. Instead, the plan is to refurbish both the Village Hall and replace the existing pavilion buildings.

The initial thinking is that there would be one new building to replace the current pavilion and tea hut buildings. The new building should have square footage approximately the size as the two buildings combined. It would include loos, showers and lockers rooms for home and away teams and a common tea/bar area that could be used for community and private events. The question was raised of whether handicapped loos were required. The WG members discussed locating the new building in a diagonal location approximately in front of the existing tea hut in a corner of the green facing the cricket pitch.

Cllr Brooks presented a photo of a potential pavilion design that all members agreed was attractive. He also said the SODC has grant for this type of facility that could offer matching funding for up to 50% of the overall project costs.

Alistair agreed to investigate Oxfordshire FA grants that may be applicable and Cormac would look into Cricket grants.

No timetable can be estimated at this point for replacement of the pavilion as many steps are required including:

- Agreed the layout and footprint of the new building
- Visiting potential vendors and getting final quotes including that of required utility work
- Applying for grants and fundraising
- Planning permission application
- Building work planning

Pending proposal for basketball net/ skateboard ramp on the VG

Cllr Donahue explained the proposal from the teenage child and her mother of a village resident for a skateboard ramp or other recreational facility for teenagers. They are due to present more detailed proposal shortly.

WG members unanimously raised concerns about a skateboard park as being out of keeping with the Village Green and that it could be intimidating for Eastfield Lane residents and also raised issues that other villages have had with them. The WG members did support the idea of a basketball net with a half court hard surface. They also reiterated the results of the Village Green Survey in which residents stated that 55% of residents favoured a basketball net, but only 23% favoured a skateboard or bicycle ramp – which was the lowest response rate on the entire survey.

The logical location for a basketball net was next to the batting cages and could replace the second 'older' batting cage that is derelict and can be removed. Alistair recommended a spongy surface appropriate for sports as opposed to a hard asphalt surface as being safer for children falling.

OCC/Whitchurch Primary school agreement with Parish Council

A document has now been drawn up by OCC that is agreed by both the parish council and school on the roles and responsibilities for use of the Village Green. We are just waiting for OCC to formalise the agreement.

Proposal memorial trees

Peter Seager, the son Susie and Andrew Seager, residents of No. 3 & Little Court, Swanston Field for over 30 years, requested a memorial tree be planted. He has offered to pay for the tree and a plaque. He did not specify a location or type of tree. The WG members recommended that the new memorial gardens being planned for the site of the old Polish Church be an appropriate location for this type of tree and other memorials in the future. Cllr Brooks is involved with the planning of the Polish Memorial Garden site and will liaise with Mr Seager on the plans for this.

In a related matter, the WG agreed that a copper beech should be ordered to replace the one near the football pitch that needed to be removed due to its closeness to the playing field. Stephen Trinder originally donated the, and at the time it was removed a commitment was made to him to replace it in a similar location but further removed from the playing field. Gill and Alastair will agree the exact location.

Other items discussed:

Trimming of the Oak tree by the mound/batting cages was recently completed by the council based on requests from residents that thought it was unsafe.

Trimming of the row of Beech Trees on Eastfield Lane by the school was discussed. Gill said that James Norman had offered to cut these trees for a minimal contribution to his costs. The discussion focussed on a general trim of the trees to ensure that co-located trees on the green were not overshadowed and that the trees had enough growing space between them as opposed to a previous proposal to cut them back to hedge height. Cllr Donahue agreed to discuss this with James.

It was agreed that the PC should hire a plumber to modify the north stop-cock to enable a standing pipe for watering the football pitch. It was recommended that the standing pipe be made in a 'hidden' way similar to golf courses to avoid accidents from people bumping into it or accidentally turning it on on by mistake.

The mound of dirt by the batting cages was discussed. It was agreed that if there was no plans to use it for any type of recreational facilities it should be removed, as it currently just gets vastly overgrown with nettles in the summer and is unusable. If it is not needed for the proposal for the new teenager facilities, we could ask Ian Smith of Bozdown Alpaca to remove it. WOTHabs stressed that the dirt should not be out on the road verges.