

OUTER WEST COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 1ST DECEMBER, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Amanda Carter in the Chair

Councillors A Blackburn, D Blackburn,
P Carlill, A Carter, A Forsaith, M Harrison
and T Smith

CHAIRS OPENING COMMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the remote meeting of the Outer West Community Committee to discuss the closure of a number of bowling greens and also the Pudsey Park Visitor Centre.

The Chair explained that internet connectivity may be an issue for some participants and suggested it may be appropriate to appoint a Vice Chair who could assume the Chair should the Chair lose connectivity. The Chair proposed that Councillor David Blackburn be nominated as the Vice Chair, the proposal was seconded, upon been put to the vote the motion was passed.

11 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

12 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion Of The Press And Public

There were no exempt items.

13 Late Items

A late item was admitted to the agenda with the agreement of the Chair. The item related to a £1000 contribution to the Farsley Live at home scheme. Minute 21 refers to this.

14 Declaration Of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

15 Apologies For Absence

There were no apologies.

16 Open Forum / Community Forum

In order to facilitate the Open Forum item whilst Community Committee meetings are being held remotely, the process has been adapted slightly, so

that members of the public are invited to make written submissions in advance of the meeting on any matter which falls within the Committee's terms of reference.

On this occasion a submission had been received from Mr Keith Worrall Chairman of Leeds Parks Veterans Association.

The following submission was read out at the meeting:

Our Association are in total objection to the proposals to close Bowling Greens in Leeds, for years the Government and Authorities have encouraged mature adults in excess of 60 to take more exercise to maintain and prolong life.

Bowling is the ideal opportunity providing gentle exercise, open air and companionship with team members and opposition team members, it is also a great benefit to people playing socially under normal circumstances it is ideal for a game a pot of tea and a chat.

Many of our elderly community are either widows or widowers and this sport is their only opportunity to mix leisurely with other people and socialise.

The Chair thanked Mr Worrall for his submission in relation to the closure of bowling greens.

17 Minutes - 9th November 2020

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th November 2020, be approved as a correct record.

18 Matters arising

In relation to item 9 Finance Report, Members were advised that there was sufficient budget in the Wellbeing Fund to fund the Summer Bands in the Park for 2021. It was noted that this had been approved for next year.

19 Bowling Green Consultation

The report of the head of Stronger Communities brought to members' attention details of an open consultation relating to Outdoor Bowls in Leeds, including planned objectives and approach options.

Members were advised a report had been presented to the Council's Executive Board in October 2020, which highlighted a budget gap in 2021/22 of £118.8 million, of which £59.1 million is due to the ongoing financial impact of Covid-19. In response, a number of proposals had been put forward including one for a 50% reduction in the number of public outdoor bowling greens managed and maintained by the council. The submitted report provided more detailed information on current provision and seeks views on how a 50% reduction can be achieved and thus make savings annually of £83k as a contribution to the budget gap identified.

In attendance for this item were:

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Monday, 18th January, 2021

- Sean Flesher - Chief Officer Parks & Countryside
- Antony Stringwell - Recreational Development Manager

The Community Committee were informed of the following points:

- The Council were looking to reduce the number of bowling green by 50% from 62 bowling greens to 31. This would also include a reduction in staff;
- A consultation process was being undertaken and had started on Monday 16th November 2020, and was due to close on Monday 14th December 2020 at 5pm. Following this, detailed proposals will be prepared to inform a decision due to be taken before the end of February 2021;
- The council currently has 62 greens city wide with the provision for summer and winter bowling;
- Bowling greens had been reviewed previously in 2014. As part of this review there had been the introduction of the season ticket, this was used by less than 30% of the members;
- There was a number of costs linked to the maintenance of the bowling greens;
- The consultation would be assessing a number of options including community asset transfers and cluster clubs which could look at clubs coming together;
- There had been a number of positive comments since the launch of the consultation exercise with active dialogue with members of the clubs.

Members' discussions included the following:

- In the Outer West area there are 7 bowling clubs with some having winter and summer greens. It was noted that there were 6 with only summer greens;
- It was noted that a number of council employees had taken the offer of the Early Leavers Initiative (ELI). 3 employees from Parks and Countryside had received approval for the ELI scheme to date;
- The report had highlighted a number of comparisons with other cities such as Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester and Sheffield. Members raised concerns that the comparisons were not realistic of a city the size of Leeds, and that the sport of Crown Green Bowls was a regional sport. Members were advised that numbers would be assessed;
- Cllr. Andrew Carter clarified that the number of staff due to take ELI were not being made redundant;
- A number of the bowling greens located in the Outer West area were spread out and that the closure of the some of the greens would mean that individual communities would lose a value resource;
- The loss of bowling greens would not only affect the bowlers but all those who attend to watch the matches. It was noted that these events are good for social interaction especially for the elderly;
- Bowling is a good exercise for all age groups from young children to older members of the community and is in an outdoor setting;

- Members were of the view that Adult Social Care should be consulted on the benefits for older people of playing bowls. The benefits were noted as good for exercise, mental wellbeing, and social interaction;
- Members raised concerns that the bowling greens were used by a number of elderly people who were not able to write letters or use the internet to join in the consultation;
- It was noted that the bowling greens in the New Wortley area were well used and provided not only exercise but a social aspect. The greens are used by clubs from different wards travelling to play against each other. New Wortley bowling clubs invite the nearby high school to attend events to encourage the younger generation to play bowls;
- It was noted that the maintenance of the greens was a specialist job;
- A drive to take up membership of bowling clubs and the encouragement of getting younger people involved in the game.

Members also raised concerns in relation to:

- The money being spent on the City of Culture compared to the £83K being saved by closing 50% of the bowling greens;
- Cost of shutting down the bowling clubs and what would become of the greens and the club houses;
- Costs in comparison to the upkeep of the greens and of the new use of the greens.

Cllr Andrew Carter proposed the following motion:

To inform the Chief Executive, Chief Officer Finance Services and the administration that the proposals on bowling greens are wholly unacceptable and that they should rethink them.

This motion was seconded, and on being put the vote the motion was carried.

It was noted that Cllr Carlill abstained.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) Comments of the Outer West Community Committee be fed into the consultation process;
- b) The Chief Executive, Chief Officer Financial Services and the administration be informed that the Outer West Community Committee find the proposals for bowling greens unacceptable and have suggested that the proposals be reconsidered.

20 Pudsey Park Visitor Centre Consultation

The report of the Head of Stronger Communities brought to members' attention details of an open consultation relating to Pudsey Park Visitor Centre, including planned objectives and approach options. The consultation was seeking thoughts and opinions on Leeds City Council's proposals to close the West

Leeds Country Park Visitor Centre and associated plant display-house, with the aim of making £90,000 per year in savings for the Council.

In attendance for this item were:

- Sean Flesher – Chief Officer Parks and Countryside
- Emma Trickett – Senior Projects Manager

Members were advised of the following points:

- Subject to a suitable business case, the proposal was to provide a café in place of the visitor centre and potentially locating the children's play area next to it;
- The café would provide toilet facilities and a terrace.

Member's discussions included:

- The need for costs associated with the up keep of the visitor centre including the green costs, keepers costs, vet fees and cost of the buildings;
- Where the funding of the café was coming from;
- Pudsey Park has always been a visitor attraction in the west of Leeds with people coming to see the animals and the plants. Schools in the area using it for educational purposes;
- There are cafes already located close to the park;
- Conservation of some species has taken place at the centre including that of the Tansey Beetle;
- There would still be costs involved with the up keep of the animals for Leeds City Council if they were transferred to other facilities such as Lotherton Hall or Tropical World. It was noted that some of the animals may be transferred to parks in other cities this would also include costs to move the animals.

Members raised concerns in relation to the following points:

- Prior funding and repayments of the visitor centre;
- Members should have been consulted prior to this stage of the consultation process;
- Online consultation discounts lots of people of having a voice to respond to issues;
- Notices regarding the consultation had not been seen by Members and it was suggested that more should be put up in and around the park;
- Costs of wages for the centre.

Members were of the view that Pudsey Park was one of the premier parks in the west of the city and the most visited outside Temple Newsam and Roundhay. It was the view that the sustainability should be looked at and more options explored for the park. It was noted that consideration should be given to the park as an environmental asset with benefits not just for the west of the city but all the city.

Cllr. Seary proposed a motion for the enhancement of the visitor centre, this was moved and seconded. On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

Cllr Carlill abstained.

RESOLVED – That there be a proposal put forward to enhance the Pudsey Park Visitor Centre.

21 Late Item - Funding for Farsley Live at Home Scheme

The Chair agreed a late item on the agenda in relation to funding for Farsley Live at Home Scheme.

Calverley and Farsley Ward Members were requested to consider the payment of £1,000 to Farsley Live at Home Scheme.

RESOLVED – That a payment of £1,000 be approved for the Farsley Live at Home Scheme.

22 Date and Time of next meeting

Members requested an additional meeting be arranged for January 2021 to discuss the Richmond House consultation.

The date of the meeting to be confirmed.

Meeting concluded at 11:50