**MINUTES OF THE SHERIFFHALES PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 7TH FEBRUARY 2019 AT SHERIFFHALES VILLAGE HALL**

Present: Councillors: Dr Alan MacWhannell (Chairman); Mr Neil Pulker (Vice Chairman); Mr John Horne; Mr Gordon Tonkinson; Mr Kevin Turley.

In attendance Clerk to the Council – Miss Jennifer Cree

18/19. Apologies for Absence.

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Mr Nicholas Edwards, Mr James Bubb and Mr Stewart Edmondson.

19/19. Declaration of Councillors’ Pecuniary Interests.

None were declared.

Councillor K Turley arrived at this point.

20/19. To receive a report on progress with Environmental Maintenance Grant application and agree any further actions required.

A Grant of £300 for match funding against Items 2 and 3 in the application by March31 2019 had been received.

Item 1 improvement to Church access gate off Church Lane and Item 4 preliminary work to improve footway adjacent to A41 had not been approved as these were considered responsibilities of Shropshire Highways maintenance team.

It was agreed that Councillor K Turley contact Mr Steve Brown and Mr Graham Downes on this matter and report back. It was noted that if this interpretation is correct any expenditure of this nature would have to be a section 137 as the Parish Council do not have powers to install a pathway on land they do not own. Action Councillor Turley and Parish Clerk.

It was proposed by Councillor J Horne and seconded by Councillor N Pulker that Item 2 refreshment and improvement of seating area at Heath Hill (including weed spraying on adjacent footpath) and Item 3 improvement of area around Church School and Village Hall should be proceeded with as soon as practicable and if any funds are left following this work, then the balance of the funds be used to ensure the visibility splays at main road junctions are cleared. This was agreed. It was further agreed that the works were to be advertised locally due to the completion deadline of the 31st March 2019 and contractors employed if needed. Action Parish Clerk.

21/19. To receive a status report on the Playing Field Community Space including Play Area and agree next actions and objectives now the boundary has been surveyed and Arboricultural report completed*.*

A definitive plan has been drawn up to show the boundary clearly and where areas of encroachment

have occurred. This document together with historical maps was presented at the meeting and is

included in these minutes (appendix1).

Councillor K Turley proposed, and Councillor J Horne seconded, that the new Boundary line be accepted and that legal services required in relation to this be undertaken by Shropshire Council Legal Department. On a vote this was carried with 4 votes for and 1 abstention.

It was noted that once this work is completed then the insurance company should be advised of the changes to the boundary and associated liabilities. Action Parish Clerk.

It was noted that the Parish Council has permitted access across the strip of land from the road to the edge of the Council owned land, and that Councillor G Tonkinson had signed a declaration to this effect in July 2015. A copy of this document was tabled at the meeting and is to be included in these minutes (appendix 2).

In relation to the development of the playing field, the report produced by Mr Derek Owen is attached (appendix 3) to these minutes.

Councillor G Tonkinson reported on results of an inspection of the boundary that included sites of overgrowth between the boundary and area regularly mown and maintained and tabled a draft specification (appendix 3 to these minutes) of works to clear the tree stumps, scrub and brash from the boundary of the playing field. He reported that an indicative time scale for potential works of approximately 2 weeks should be considered.

Members discussed possible ideas for reinstatement of the land and agreed that the Clerk should contact the Shropshire Playing Fields Association to discuss further and report back next meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor N Pulker and seconded by Councillor A MacWhannell that remedial work, where practical, be undertaken to clear the immediate edges of scrub and brush prior to the start of mowing in March. On a vote this was carried. Action Parish Clerk.

22/19. Items for future Meetings.

Review SPFA response and Costings for Playing field Improvements. Invite Shropshire Council Representative to meeting? Peter Nutting / Clive Wright to attend.

23/19. Dates of Next Meetings

14th March 2019

16th May 2019

11th July 2019

12th September 2019

7th November 2019

Appendix 1 to the minutes of Sheriffhales Parish Council held on the 7th February 2019

Report received 4th July 2018

Jenny / Alan,

Apologies for the delay in responding to your e-mail.

This is an initial free response to your queries in the anticipation that I would be employed by the Parish Council to act as your agent on purchasing play equipment, contract supervise any play equipment installations for a small fee to cover my time spent on the project. Some of the answers below are a little brief as we may need further information in order to progress. I hope this is acceptable.

* To consider noise levels of new equipment / items

Items of play equipment will vary in their use, but in my experience (apart from ball courts and skate parks), the noisiest item is a basket swing which is already in use at the site. New equipment is unlikely to individually any nosier, however, increasing the range of facilities is likely to increase usage and therefore increase general noise from users. Care needs to be taken when locating new items as this both needs to take account of the potential nuisance to adjacent properties and also the safety of the user (e.g. putting a piece of equipment behind a goal / too close together (does then not comply to safety requirements) or too close to obstacles such as trees / nettles).  Activity trails / gym items are relatively low key use and are highly unlikely to cause nuisance even if placed in close proximity to residential property.

* Access from gate and path for disabled park users

This is a tricky project to achieve full wheelchair accessibility given the length of slope / restricted width and tree roots. There are a few design options here. Firstly, consider the materials. The slope will almost certainly have water runoff which will tend to was away any soft surface such as hoggin unless the path is raised (and even then it will require topping up occasionally). You could also consider an ‘aco’ drain  leading to a soakaway at the top of the slope to intercept the water runoff from the playing field. You could also consider a more hard wearing material such as macadam of concrete. Then there is a relatively new surface which you could consider which is tiger mulch which you can lay straight down on the ground. The design may also need to consider the provision of a disabled accessible access gate (usually self-closing) which also doesn’t impact upon vehicular access as this will occasionally be required. A combination gate should be sufficient for this purpose. The width of the path needs to be a minimum of 1.2m wide (between the tyre tracks) but if its raised above ground it needs to be a little bit wider to allow for error and will need to be level at the entrance so vehicles do not damage the path as they cross the path as the path goes from the side to the centre.. You may also need to increase the lower tyre tracks so that vehicles don’t damage the path. Approximately halfway up the path there needs to be a 1.5m level pad as a rest point for wheelchair users.  Costs for the above will vary depending upon your choice, but it is likely to be a fair amount, so you need to decide if this issue is a priority given the high cost. It may be that the slope will have a fall of over 1:12 so wouldn’t officially comply to an accessible access path anyway (although it would be as much as you could do).

* Equipment for under 3’s

You could look at a smaller Multi unit for younger children (requires safer surfacing) / springy animals / cars etc. / static cars / playhouses (N.B. these can attract young people late at night if a large facility) and play panels (shop etc.). All the above items are missing from the current equipment on the site for this age range, but this would increase the size of the play area considerably. If there are limited finances the play panels are a reasonable cheap provision. The other option would be to see if you could look at fitting a tango seat which is a mother and toddler combined seat which allows the parent to swing with the toddler face to face. I can’t rember the swing unit so not sure if this can be done on that unit though. If not a separate swing could be put in for this?

* Fitness trail that’s rustic and marked for distance

I’m not a particular fan of fitness trails, as not actually seen them used much, and they tend to be made of wood without any metal anchors (rots fairly quickly). However, they are fairly cheap to purchase (and replace). Certain items will require surfacing to prevent slips on mud and some may require safer surfacing (e.g. grass matting) because of their height. Wooden posts around the area (or recycled plastic posts) can be marked with distances every 200m or so, so that a regular running route can be measured.

* Toilet Pro’s and Con’s - options???

Toilets are being taken out of council parks across the country because they cost so much to maintain. The predominant cost is caused by repairs to vandalism. Installing an ‘official’ water and electrical supply would be very costly (tens of thousands), therefore, if you are considering this provision perhaps you could look to carry out a trial with a portaloo. I would suggest that this be secured in the ground by ground anchors (to prevent it being tipped over) or fenced in on 3 sides (ensuring that this is worked with the hire company so they are able to empty it). Securing the facility in the night may also be required so opening it and closing it might become a regular issue as this can become a tiresome duty for volunteers. Don’t forget to include ongoing costs for toilet roll and hand gel.

* Disabled play equipment

The 3 main items for people with a disability are basket swing (already got), an integrated roundabout (flush to surface) and a trampoline (see below). The roundabout is a really good idea but requires wetpour safer surfacing around it so can be really expensive.

* Trampolines in the ground

Great for younger and older children and if a larger trampoline was purchased this also allows for a wheelchair user and carer / able bodied people to safely share the equipment. Costs can vary but this item does not require safer surfacing as it is flush to the ground once installed.

* Fencing requirements

There is no legal requirement to fence the equipped play area from the rest of the recreation ground. As long as the gate onto the road is closed, then this would be as recommended in guidance by RoSPA and Fields In Trust. It is only if you want to prevent dogs going into the play area that you may want to consider this. Fencing must not be near equipment (be outside the items free fall space) or the item would fail its safety check. Also, you may need to move the football goals nearer the centre of the field if putting fencing in. The fence must not be climbable (so post and rail is no good). Bow top fencing is the usual which is provided but this can be expensive. Access would usually require 2 self-closing pedestrian gates and a maintenance gate. Suggest one pedestrian gate is a combined gate to save money if this option is being considered. Costing this can only be done when you know the extent of the proposed play area.

* Are the edges of the field adequate, do they need to be improved – dens in the pathways and also gates onto playing fields allowed?

These edges are perfectly acceptable from a safety point of view and are actively encouraged by Play England as active communities comes on line which encourages children to explore the environment. Regular checks to monitor whether fires etc. are not being carried out needs to be considered.

* Fort / Play type house equipment

There is a massive range of multi-unit equipment on the market as these often are the items with the highest play value. Multi-units can act as a fort and a play house type of facility if large enough or over 2 platforms so that it has a section beneath the canopy above. Each have different sizes of safer surfacing requirement the bigger / taller the bigger / wider / deeper the safer surface requirement. The existing multi-unit is reaching the end of its life at the moment and you should consider its replacement in the next few years and constantly monitor for movement (once rot starts it does tend to go quickly). You can go the traditional aesthetic method of wooden equipment or wooden equipment with metal anchors (so the wood isn’t touching the floor) or metal (can be painted green / brown). Wood rots eventually so longevity wise, galvanised metal lasts significantly longer (with maintenance – painting), but wood may last between 5 years and 25 years before requiring replacement and will require more maintenance and repair in between). Wood does look better though. The only trouble with a combined playhouse / multi-unit is that there is the potential for this to become a shelter for young people in the evening.

* Access is required for mowing machines over pathway in and gate

See above remarks.

* Gym Equipment

There’s a range of gym kit around at the moment. The higher quality ones have heart monitors on them, adjustable seats and adjustable strengths. Then there is a good quality basic range which have the basic operations but not the accessories. The basic range is what I have tended to use as there is less to go wrong on these (minimal maintenance) and there are a third of the price of the higher quality items. Choosing the items you want which are the most popular to use would my suggestion. A company very close to you in Telford builds outdoor gyms and we could visit this company to see them at the factory? There could be a package deal available here. Safer surfacing is not always require, but I would advise grass matting to ensure the area doesn’t become muddy around the item.

* Dogs on parks – rulings…

As mentioned above. Play areas do not have to ban dogs from play areas. This is a matter for the individual council / council insurer. Most local parish play areas are unfenced. One option could be to place a sign up nearer the play area (not in a free fall area) to request owners of dogs are requested not to allow their dog in the area around the play equipment?

* Undertake community engagement of what they would like to see

This can be done in a number of ways. A public meeting could be held which asks the local community what they would like to see. Children from the local school could also send in their ideas. This provides evidence of need (including pictures of the play area the children would like to see). Then a more detailed meeting to look at the specific options which could be afforded, to both choose the type of provision and the priority. Again this shows real community engagement which funders like. I usually get 4 designs and then the community have a choice of 4 to choose from? This design is ratified / amended by parish before building.

* Signage

Please find attached a play area safety sign that Telford & Wrekin council uses and RoSPA highlight as a model to use. Is this something that you can amend? The design / wording of it can be easily amended to make it more user friendly.

* Community engagement

As above.

* The wooden climbing equipment is in need of replacing / repair

As above (fort / play house). I think this facility could be combined.

* What is the requirement from our insurers re inspections etc…

This will be dependent upon your insurer. If Zurich, it has been that the play area be built and maintained to RoSPA standard. Therefore, a post installation inspection / Risk Assessment report is required after construction to state it is safe to use, regular safety inspections and an annual independent safety inspection. All issues highlighted to be rectified (N.B. this is a little bit onerous as all play areas have risks and common sense will indicate if a low risk is worth sorting or just monitoring. I would ask the insurer though to confirm.

Should you have any queries on the above please do not hesitate to contact me.

Appendix 2 to the minutes of Sheriffhales Parish Council held on the 7th February 2019