

Abbots Langley Parish Council

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11th August 2021.

To Members of the Leisure Committee

Councillors Sara Bedford, Jean Bowman, Liz Burns, Ruth Clark, Jane Lay, (Chairman), Simon Stanley, Jon Tankard, John Wyatt & Roxanne Yau.

The next meeting of the Leisure Committee will be held will be held at Tanners Wood Hall, School Mead, Abbots Langley WD5 0LA on Wednesday 18th August 2021 at 7:30 pm when your presence is summoned for the purpose of transacting the business outlined below.

The press and public are welcome to attend the meeting.

Tim Perkins
Clerk to the Council

Prior to the meeting at 7:00 pm Simon Aulton, Chief Executive Officer, Community Action Dacorum will be presenting on the Abbots Langley & Kings Langley Repair Shed Project

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**
To receive and accept apologies for absence.
2. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda.
3. **Public Participation**
To note if any members of the public have requested to speak at this meeting, in accordance with the Parish Council's Public Speaking Arrangements.
4. **To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on**
16th June 2021.
5. **Reports from Allotments Representatives**
To receive reports from the Allotments Representatives.
6. **Reports from Sports Representatives**
To receive reports from the Sports Representatives.
7. **Abbots Langley & Kings Langley Repair Shed**
To consider the next stages following the presentation from Community Action Dacorum.
8. **Depot Surface Project**
To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 1.)
9. **Evergreen FC - FA Pitch Improvement Programme**
To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 2.)
10. **Primrose Hill Play Area**
To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 3.)

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11. Manor House Skate Park

To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 4.)

12. Clerk's Report

To consider items not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

13. Exclusion of the Press and Public (Part II)

As the following items will consider the early stages of a legal dispute a resolution to exclude the press and public may be required, under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and the LGA 1972, s100.

14. Abbots Langley Tennis Club - Club Supreme

To consider a verbal update from the Clerk.

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Clerk's Report - Leisure Committee - August 2021

1. Depot Surface Project

Members will recall the original design and specification work for this project was carried out by Frankham Consultancy. The tender process was managed by Watford BC Procurement Team, who were very helpful.

The outcome of the tender is the recommended contractor is Murrill Construction, they are a long established public works and highways contractor who have completed many projects for local authorities.

Murrill have submitted a comprehensive costed proposal which details the individual cost elements. There are a couple of items that require cost clarification, but otherwise the proposal is as required. They have also submitted bills of materials, method statements and risk assessments.

Tendered project cost is **£121,236**, which is in the range we expected from initial costings.

There are two cost elements which are not included in the above.

Depot Sump/Sludge Collector - This is in the middle of the current surface, it needs to be dug out, the arisings, which are likely to be contaminated, disposed of and the sump re-established. The issue is until the dig starts the extent of the sump is unknown. It is estimated to be apx. 30m². The quoted cost of the work is £160m², so is expected to be apx. £4,800. Once constructed the sump will require occasional draining out by a sludge truck.

Depot Relocation - The works are estimated to take around three-four weeks, so allowing for overrun, the time to relocate, re-establish the site and equipment we need to find a secure site for six to eight weeks to house the depot equipment and staff.

The Facilities Manager and Works Manager are looking at options, short term lets, possibly the TRDC Furtherfield site, but until we have a project commencement date it is difficult to make firm plans or detail costings, as they will very much be dependant on the sites available at the time.

Funds to support this project have been previously budgeted and are available from the General Fund. There is a good argument to release the £85,000 capital fund (ex-Fire Station sale) to part fund the project.

This work must go ahead to create a safe and practical working environment for the staff based at the depot. Whilst there are still the relocation costs to be finalised there is a "chicken and egg" situation. Until we have a confirmed date for the works, we cannot finalise any relocation arrangements.

Given the cost of the project and the potential impact on operations members may want to make a formal recommendation to the Parish Council to gain approval to proceed. This would be appropriate if the Capital Reserve is to be released to fund the project.

2. Evergreen Pitch Improvement Programme

Mark Ward, Chairman of Evergreen FC, Steve Maker, Herts FA and I met online to discuss the above.

The FA are holding out for a formal agreement to be reached before they start talking in detail about the project. The "letter of engagement" I provided committing the PC to work with all parties was not acceptable.

It is a strange situation. In all my experience of coming to commercial agreements, these are reached when the practicalities, financials and logistics of a deal are pretty much worked out and then the agreement follows. Not in the FA it seems.

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I am aware of a couple of PCs that have reached agreement with the FA, but these are smaller councils, with one or two pitches and usually just one club. The agreement reached with Evergreen and the FA needs to be equitable to all of the PC's tenant clubs and I suspect in this detail some gremlins may be lurking.

Herts FA have agreed to provide some redacted agreements with PCs that have been reached already, which may be helpful. At the time of writing these have not been received. ^[1]

Prior to my departure Mark Ward and I will meet, hopefully with my successor and we will make an effort to try and scope out the elements which will need to be addressed in the actual programme and also in the agreement.

This agreement has the potential to fundamentally change the PCs role as a pitch provider to Evergreen FC and it will also impact on the role of the Works Team, so there will be significant work required from all parties

I also made the point when we met that the success of the programme will also be determined to a great extent by the access to the grounds for the planned maintenance works and the playing fields primary use as freely accessible public open space.

^[1] *Redacted agreements have now been received from the FA, but I have not had time to review.*

3. Primrose Hill Play Area

There were a number of frustrations and tensions between Three Rivers District Council and Parish Council staff around the opening of the above.

TRDC colleagues were pushing for the opening as they had got signatures on the Certificate of Practical Completion, RoSPA checks and all the other paperwork.

But, and this is why I was pushing back and a number of members agreed, the paperwork may have been straight, but the contractors failed to pass the "eye ball test".

The area looked awful and the Works Team had to spend hours strimming, cutting and making it presentable for users.

Residents will not judge our authorities on the paperwork, they will judge if the area is value for money by the visual appearance and on that front the contractors badly let their customer down.

The contractors said the visual appearance was "not their job", well in my view it should have been and if that was not in the contract then it was a point of failure.

When in the future the PC is entering joint funding arrangements with TRDC on similar projects, the final visual condition of the project needs to be an acceptance criteria. It may be subjective but being asked to take over a project when the first thing the PC has to do is undertake hours of grounds maintenance work is not acceptable.

The Sales Director of the contractor would not accept any responsibility for the visual condition of the play area and was dismissive of my complaints. I was seriously not impressed by his attitude.

When the Parish Council is making such significant contributions to projects such as Primrose Hill there may be a strong argument for the Parish Council to have a formal sign off on project completion, or even be joint parties on the contract with TRDC. (See *related comments on the skate park which follow.*)

Since opening there have been a number of further problems, items have fallen off equipment and equipment with sprung bases have worked loose in days. The contractor did attend and made some repairs but decided to leave the loose bases until after the summer holidays as they deemed them safe.

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4. Skate Park

We continue to struggle to get the contractors back to make warranty repairs to the skate park. They are ignoring repeated complaints and are being obstructive.

If the Parish Council had been named on the contract along with TRDC I would by now have instructed our solicitors to put a well aimed and noisy shot across the contractors bows. Something TRDC seem reluctant to do.

We have been told by the contractor we cannot affect repairs as this will void the warranty, yet they refuse to turn out to make the repairs which they are contractually required to do.

5. Three Rivers District Council - Tree Strategy 2022-2027

Just as the papers for this meeting were being finalised a draft of the above was received.

The strategy is available from <https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/eqcl-page/consultations> along with a link that members can respond to in their own right.

If members want to make a consolidated response on behalf of the PC then any comments should be sent to me or my successor by latest 27th September, so they can be collated and submitted ahead of the consultation deadline on 30th September.

6. Parking Ticket Machine - Primrose Hill

The above was forced open with heavy tools and an angle grinder to gain access to the cash box, which of course does not contain cash.

The cost to repair, including some rewiring, was £260. The insurance policy excess is £400.

This was reported and a crime reference number received.

Tim Perkins
11th August 2021.