

Minutes of the meeting of Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board held at Great Notley Country Park, Braintree at 3.00pm on Wednesday 2 December 2020.

Present:

Councillors:

S Walsh (Chairman)	Essex County Council
G Butland	Braintree District Council
M Platt	Essex County Council
W Schmitt	Braintree District Council

The following officers and advisors were also present in support:

Claire Bunn	Park Development Manager, ECC
Dee O'Rourke	Head of Essex Culture and Green Spaces, ECC
Paul Partridge	Head of Operations, BDC
Mark Rowley	Commercial Operations Manager, ECC
Paul Stokes	Operations Manager, ECC
Judith Dignum	Democratic Services Officer, ECC

1. Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The Board received the report on Membership, Apologies and Declarations and it was noted that:

1. The membership of the Board was as shown in the report.
2. Apologies had been received from Sam Kennedy (Director, Environment and Climate Action, Essex County Council) and Samir Pandya (Head of Operations, Braintree District Council).
3. Councillor Butland declared a Code interest in agenda item 3 (Provision of an allotment at Great Notley Country Park) in that he was a member of Great Notley Parish Council. He remained present during consideration of the item but took no part in the discussion or voting thereon (Minute 3 below refers).

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board held on 5 February 2020 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Updates in relation to actions agreed at that meeting were provided during presentation of the other items on the agenda.

3. Provision of an allotment at Great Notley Country Park (GTP/03/20)

Councillor G Butland declared a Code interest in this item (Minute 1 above refers). He remained present during its consideration but took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.

The Partnership Board's approval was sought to allocate two areas of uncultivated (unused) open space at the Country Park for allotments for the Parish of Great Notley.

The following information was provided in response to Members' questions:

- Given that the Parish Council would be contributing to the funding, it was likely that the allotments would be primarily intended for use by residents of Great Notley. There was a high demand for allotments in the area, with some 40 residents already on the waiting list for a plot, and it had proved difficult to identify a suitable location within the Parish boundary.
- Ease of providing a water supply to the site would be one of the issues considered as part of the feasibility study to be undertaken if the allocation of the land was approved. The hope was that it would be possible to achieve this through onsite rainwater collection.

It was **Agreed**:

1. To approve in principle the allocation of the land identified in Appendix 1 to report GTP/03/20 for the provision of allotments for the parish of Great Notley.
2. To support the proposal for further discussions to take place between Essex County Council, Braintree District Council and Great Notley Parish Council.

4. Site Report (GTP/04/20)

The Board received the latest update on issues at the Country Park.

Particular attention was drawn to the following:

- Covid-19 had affected various aspects of the Park's operation, including reduced staffing, lack of volunteer activity and cancellation of events. However, visitor numbers had been high and the Park was currently very busy in comparison to this time in previous years.
- The café was now being managed in-house by Essex County Council. Although to date it had only been possible to offer a takeaway service, this was proving popular.
- Although most events had been cancelled, a successful play trail had been organised for October half-term, with a further one planned for Christmas.

- In response to a question, it was agreed to investigate the possibility of improving the surface at the non-vehicle entrance to the Park adjacent to the Pegasus crossing.

The Board was advised that a number of maintenance issues had arisen with regard to the play equipment and Essex County Council was currently in the process of agreeing funding for the necessary remedial work and renewal of safety resurfacing. This would help to bring facilities up to standard in the short-term while establishing a funded rolling programme of maintenance for the future, necessary especially as a proportion of the equipment was reaching end of life. The absence of such a programme was a concern and had only been recently identified.

A discussion took place regarding the current arrangements for managing fishing in the Park and whether they may require revision, particularly in view of the diversity of wildlife present in the lake area. It was agreed that a report should be submitted to the next meeting of the Partnership Board.

The report and update were noted.

It was **Agreed** that:

1. A report on the current arrangements in place for managing fishing in the Country Park and potential options for the future be submitted to the next meeting of the Partnership Board.

5. Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) and Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) (GTP/05/20)

The Board received an update on usage and income from the Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) and Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) at Great Notley Country Park for the period from 1 April to 31 October 2020.

The following issues were noted during the update:

- Resurfacing of the Artificial Grass Pitch, as noted at the Board's last meeting, had now been completed.
- In common with other similar facilities, usage and income had declined sharply as a result of closure during Covid, meaning that the annual income target would not be met. As this had been the case for a number of years, Braintree District Council was considering a reduction, to be implemented as part of the 2021/22 budget.
- Engagement with Community Iron (the community charity of Braintree Town Football Club) was ongoing and activities had continued despite Covid-19. The possibility of promoting the available activities to schools, as proposed at the Board's last meeting, would be taken forward as part of the regular review of the Football Development Plan

The report and update were noted.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting would be agreed in due course, with availability to be canvassed by the Democratic Services Officer.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 15.35pm.

Chairman