

# LEIGHTON-LINSLADE CROQUET CLUB

GENERAL COMMITTEE MEETING Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2012  
At 12.30 pm - Page's Park pavilion

**Committee Members:** -David Ball (chairman), Roger Stroud (secretary), Len Buckingham (treasurer), Eve Buckingham, John Cundell, Malcolm Kirby, John Thorp, Val Jeffers, Tony Stammers

## Minutes

### **1. Welcome**

David Ball welcomed everyone.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

Roger had received a note from Val Jeffers saying that she would attend but would be late.

### **3. Minutes of meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2012**

John Cundell confirmed that Margaret Brown had been contacted re the fees for junior members - £25 for the first year and 50% on-going.

The minutes were accepted and a copy signed by David Ball.

### **4. Matters arising & review of Actions (if not included below)**

There were no matters arising.

### **5. Secretary's report including correspondence to Club**

#### **5.1 Town Mayor's Annual Civic Service**

Roger reported that he had received notification of this service from Christine Barrow, the Town Mayor's secretary. It was agreed that **Roger will reply** to Christine indicating that we will say that there will be 6 representatives from our club attending.

### **6. Treasurer's report**

Len Buckingham circulated a Balance Sheet showing the balances as at 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2012 and confirmed that we will be paying shortly our annual CA membership fees of £7.30 per member.

Len also said that much of our lawn maintenance work will be carried out by the Town Council based upon quotes received for which they will be paid and that the quotations received from the Town Council are very competitive.

Also said was that our annual membership fee for the EACF had already been paid.

The committee expressed thanks to Len for his hard work.

### **7. Membership Secretary's Report**

John Cundell spoke on behalf of Judith Cundell, our Membership Secretary.

John said that last year our club had 58 members + Nigel, an honorary member.

Since sending out the membership application forms for the 2012 season: -

36 re-joined and paid already

John considers that there is about another dozen or so who are likely to send in application forms in the near future.

The committee expressed thanks to Judith and John for their hard work.

## **8. Fixture Secretary**

John Thorp said that the following clubs may be interested in a Friendly Match against our club: -

Kenilworth, Ealing, Watford, Stony Stratford, Letchworth & Wingrave.

John Cundell recommended approaching Roger Nicholl at Watford ASAP.

John Thorp mentioned that Northampton now have a new Chairman.

## **9. Matches**

### **9.1 EACF League**

John Cundell read out the summary points from the note sent out by Chris Howell which is attached to these minutes – see Appendix 1 attached.

In summary John said: -

a) The handicap league will stay pretty well the same – we will enter two teams.

b) A level play league is proposed.

After discussion John Thorp proposed that our club should enter a team in the level play league; the proposal was seconded by David Ball and the **committee voted in favour of this proposal.**

John also referred to a new format being proposed which involved playing with a team of six players. John suggested that this would mean that two cars would be needed transporting the team to an away game where the current team of four players only requires one car. John suggested that we should try out this new format with our local clubs to see how it works out on the lawns.

Regarding which of our members are prepared to play on matches generally, John Cundell will put a notice up in the club house for players to indicate matches / competitions they would like to take part in for the Selection Committee to action.

## **10. Diary Dates update**

### **10.1 Official Opening**

Roger has arranged for the Mayor and Mayoress to visit our club for the Official Opening on 8<sup>th</sup> April at 2pm

### **10.2 Club Champions Tournament at Newport**

In the recent newsletter this was shown as being on April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The correct date is April 29<sup>th</sup> and taking part for our club will be Jean Ball and Roger Stroud.

### **10.3 Watford B Level Tournament**

John added this to our diary which is on May 14<sup>th</sup> at Watford.

### **10.4 Jubilee Celebrations**

June 4<sup>th</sup> is 'Jubilee Monday'.

Gill Miller from the Town Council contacted David Ball and said that there will be festivities in Pages Park on that day.

David offered to organise for our club to be playing croquet in whites on the day.

In discussion in our meeting, David also suggested that we also set up a Produce & Craft stall and ask our members if they make some Produce & Craft items for this stall – John Cundell will include this request in the next newsletter.

David Ball will be speaking to Gill Miller about the arrangements for the event in Pages Park including possible use of the pavilion, and also signs within the park pointing to the croquet lawns and craft stalls.

## **11. Lawns & Equipment**

### **11.1 Maintenance**

John Cundell said that the lawns have been treated and cut already.

John also requested purchasing new claws for the scarifier which would cost about £30. **The committee agreed that he should go ahead and purchase these new claws.**

Regarding lawn maintenance during March, John Cundell will speak to Doug (member of the Council maintenance staff). John also mentioned that most of the moss has gone from the lawns.

### **11.2 Lawn 2**

The committee agreed that we should defer using lawn 2 until the end of April to allow the new grass to get established and to make this lawn 'out of bounds' completely until ready to use.

### **11.3 Trolleys**

John Thorp has carried out some internet research on trolleys which would be used for taking the croquet equipment (hoops etc) to each of the lawns. Following a discussion about the choice of trolleys, it was agreed that some members would investigate options at a local garden centre. Decision to purchase to be then made by those committee members concerned.

## **12. Clubroom preparation for the new season**

We need to move equipment out of the clubroom into the new container before general tidying up of the clubhouse can begin.

## **13. Pegs**

David Ball raised discussion of this topic regarding choosing who will play with whom during our general club play.

Eve suggested using playing cards instead of pegs – this idea was rejected as it was felt that cards would blow away, be lost etc.

During discussion it was suggested that a problem is that some players, having drawn a particular peg, put the peg back in the bag and then forget which peg they had drawn. John Cundell suggested that players should clip their peg to their clothing until they are going to the lawn to play.

It was agreed that David Ball would obtain and paint new pegs and make a board and John Cundell will produce matching colour artwork for the board.

## **14. Any other business**

### **14.1 Recent Council Meeting**

Recently Len Buckingham phoned Pat Kingsnorth regarding a new government policy on 'green spaces'. Pat suggested that Len attend the next Council Meeting on this topic - Len went to the meeting and spoke to the Councillors.

Len said that Councillor Bowater is following it up and will make the appropriate response to the government.

Len made the point that any green spaces selected by the government under this scheme will be protected and kept as a green space for 60 years.

John Cundell & David Ball attended the Leisure & Community services section of the same meeting and John read out at our meeting appropriate highlights of the document 'Results of the November Consultation Meetings' produced by a consultancy funded by the Council (see Appendix 2 attached).

### **14.2 Clothing**

Val Jeffers enquired about our current position re clothing.

John Cundell said that there will be an article in the next newsletter. Samples can be obtained and a number of members already have shirts and hats.

Meeting Closed at 2.08pm.

# APPENDIX 1

## To all club Secretaries - Golf Croquet League. - East Anglian Croquet Federation

### Golf Croquet Leagues - 2012

Further to my proposals, sent to clubs in early January, I am having to move forwards quicker than anticipated, with an additional Level Play League. Having taken on board the responses I have received from clubs, there is an enthusiasm for playing level, along with concerns over the number of members available to fulfil the commitments of two leagues. I have no wish to exclude any player. Thus: -

1. The Handicapped League remains in its original format. It should encourage new and relatively inexperienced players into competition.  
(Handicapped League rules for 2012 are on the EACF web-site)
2. An additional competition will be the Level Play League.  
This is open to all players regardless of handicaps.  
All players can play in both leagues.

### GOLF CROQUET LEVEL PLAY LEAGUE RULES - 2012

1. There will be 4 players in a team.
2. All will play level.
3. No substitutes after a match has started.
4. No player may represent more than one club in a season.
5. 13 point games will be played, with a 1 hour time limit.
6. Teams will play 4 singles games and 2 doubles.  
( There is flexibility here, by arrangement, if time/distance travelled, is an issue on the day of the match. )
7. A team will be awarded 3 points for a win. 1 for a draw. The club collecting the most points in a season will be declared the competition winners.
8. Cards must be filled in using the appropriate table.
9. If a team cancels unilaterally less than 3 clear days before a match, that team forfeits all points.
10. The League Manager should be informed of results by the host club.
11. In the event of a dispute the League Manager's decision shall be final.

It is hoped that many clubs will take part in both leagues.  
In order to inform clubs of match schedules for the coming season, club secretaries should indicate their team preferences to me  
[cmhowell@waitrose.com](mailto:cmhowell@waitrose.com)  
by FEBRUARY 25<sup>th</sup> at the latest.

## Appendix 2 - Consultancy Report

### 9. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

#### 9.1 Interest Groups and Organisations - Mentmore Road Memorial Playing Fields

##### Linslade Tennis Club: Vision

There are two tennis clubs in Leighton-Linslade providing a total of 7 courts. Both facilities are however second class with no covered playing courts and poor clubhouse facilities.

It can be argued that a town the size of Leighton-Linslade should be providing far better facilities that will engage more people of all ages, from school pupils to senior citizens, in the game either socially or competitively to a higher standard than exists at present.

A single facility comprising a minimum of:

- 2 covered floodlit courts
- 6 outside floodlit courts
- Practice wall

Clubhouse with:

- Changing rooms
- Treatment rooms
- Toilets
- Kitchen
- Lounge
- Meeting rooms
- Bar

Should be developed with support from both existing clubs, the LTA, the Town Council and other national sports development bodies.

Such a development would be expensive, and outside the financial scope of either club, but classed rightly as 'inspired', representing a step change in the provision of tennis to Leighton-Linslade. As such it should attract substantial financial support.

Location Options:

Mentmore Road Memorial Playing Fields has the space necessary subject to some other existing sports use being re-sited. It has the advantage that 3 floodlit courts already exist to defray the cost of development. No suitable clubhouse exists.

Bell Close has no extra space available without eating into the cricket field. It does however have 4 floodlit courts and a shared clubhouse that could be upgraded. We are aware that Cedars School in Mentmore Road has started investigations into the promotion of tennis in the school through development of the 7 hard courts in their grounds. These courts are in a poor state of repair with no lighting but, together with the location and scope for additional sports (cricket, canoeing) usage of the site and a new pavilion, have great potential for the creation of a tennis academy and club. Having a tennis club sharing these facilities within the school grounds will present access constraints as the school will want to use the facilities during the school day and perhaps at other times.

Interim development of Linslade Tennis Club:

Linslade Tennis Club cannot do nothing while the vision is agreed, planned, funded and built over the coming years.

In January 2012 the third court in the Memorial Playing Fields will become successfully floodlit providing a welcome boost to junior coaching particularly. All three courts have been cleaned and painted in 2011 and are now in an excellent state of repair.

A fourth tennis court however is not a feasible possibility within the close proximity of the existing courts due to underground sewerage pipes. The remaining necessary development for the Club is to provide better clubhouse facilities. While a strategic plan remains a possibility it is important that we keep any expenditure on this element to a minimum particularly as our club financial resources are small and grants are non-existent.

We have received planning permission to erect two 7m x 3m secure metal cabins in the enclosure next to Courts 1 and 2 and to fit them out with toilets, changing, storage, kitchen and lounge facilities. The appeal of this solution was its cost as we had been promised the two cabins for only a small charitable donation. Unfortunately only one cabin is now available to us and we must reassess our options.

One option we wish to explore further is the improved access to the facilities that could be provided by the existing pavilion.

- We need access to a kitchen to allow catering during tournaments and after league matches
- We need access to toilet facilities whenever courts are in use

- We need storage facilities for our more valuable equipment
- We need a club room where we can display club notices and host visiting teams
- We need access to shelter when the weather become inclement during play

If we can find a way to achieve this within the existing facilities (accepting that some expenditure will be necessary to improve and secure the accommodation) that is acceptable to all users of the pavilion, then this could turn out to be our best option.

Other options are to proceed with the metal cabin in the hope that a second cabin can be found, or to build from scratch a wooden clubhouse in the enclosure.

We also feel that the car park needs to be open later to enable better use of

#### **Southcott Village RA FC and Southcott Village RA Youth FC:**

The Southcott Village RA currently uses Mentmore Road Memorial Playing Fields regularly to play football. They are keen to see improved and large changing facilities. They also expressed concern that the pitch at Mentmore used to be a lovely playing surface. However over the last few years it has become uneven and has patches with no grass. Whilst they do not have funding available for improvements at present they are keen to work in partnership with the Town Council and feel they could help to raise money in whatever way they could.

#### **Leighton and District Sunday League (football):**

Leighton and District Sunday League use the Playing Fields in the winter months for Sunday matches. They would like to see better security for the changing rooms. At present they have no other funding available for improvements. They are concerned that the 'clash' of cricket and football in September needs to be addressed. They feel this could be achieved by staggered kick off times.

#### **Linslade Bowls Club:**

Linslade Bowls Club is established users of Mentmore Road Memorial Playing Fields. They would like to see floodlights installed at the rear of the Pavillion and for the bowling green. They feel that this would offer a real value to the bowls green and they do have some funding available should it be considered. They are happy to be involved in further consultation with the Town Council.

#### **T.S. Ocean Naval Cadets Corps:**

The T S Ocean Naval Cadets Corps use the Pavillion in Mentmore Road Memorial Playing Fields on Tuesday and Friday evenings between 6.30p.m. and 8.30p.m. They provide activities for 8 to 18 years olds. They are concerned about the lighting,

especially around the Pavillion. However they are currently looking for a more centralised location to operate from.

**Mentmore Road Under 5's Pre School:**

The Pre School use the Pavillion in Mentmore Road Memorial Playng Fields five mornings a week. They are longstanding users of the Pavillion and the Park and have been in operation here since 1976. They use the playing fields for outdoor play and walks with the children. They would like the pavilion to be brought back up to standard as at the moment it is in a poor state. It has a leaking roof. If a new building was built we would still like the use of the building to carry on giving the community a service for under 5's.

Whilst they do not have any funds available for improvements they are keen to work in partnership with the Town Council and have urged that the Early Years Team at Central Bedfordshire Council should be consulted about any plans to replace the pavilion.

**Bedfordshire Cricket Club:**

Bedfordshire Cricket Club are the governing body for cricket in Bedfordshire. They feel it is vital to retain the cricket pitches at Mentmore Road Memorial Playing Fields especially in view of all the new housing that is proposed for the town. They feel that Leighton Buzzard is rapidly expanding and there should be enough facilities provided for newcomers and young people to play cricket. It should also be recognised that there is currently a rapid expansion in the playing of cricket by women and girls that places extra demand on existing facilities. They are aware that clubs do pay for the use of existing facilities.

They are concerned that the Pavillion in Mentmore is a disgrace. They highlighted that funds should be sources from central government, Central Bedfordshire Council, Sport England and Team Beds and Luton to greatly improve the facilities offered and inspire people to use it and the facilities.

**Simon CL:**

Simon CL regards Mentmore Road Memorial Playing Fields as their home. They highlighted that they would like to see some cricket nets provided in the park. The only funding they have available is monies they collect through subscriptions.

**9.2 Interest Groups and Organisations – Pages Park**

**Chaloner Court Residents Association**

Their members use the park for walks, bike riding, walking dogs and bring children/grand children to the play facilities in the park. They would like to see more landscaping to make the park look more attractive. They are keen to see better

CCTV and security provided in the park. They want to see additional toilets provided, better cycling facilities incorporated and the park closed at night. They are concerned about the vandalism that occurs and feel that this could be addressed if the park was better policed. They suggested that maybe a park warden should be employed to take on some of this role.

They also feel that there should be better maintenance of the tennis facilities. They also raised concern about the language from the football teams and feel this should be addressed. In addition they highlighted the noise nuisance that is posed by people using remote control cars and feel they should be discouraged from the park.

**Leighton Buzzard Town Cricket Club:**

This group regularly uses the cricket facilities in the summer months in Pages Park. They highlighted that the cricket pitches are good quality but they do need regular (weekly) attention. They feel they receive a good service from the Parks Department but feel that on occasions the pitch has not been adequately prepared. In addition they feel it would be helpful if the parking facilities could be improved.

**Simmon CL:**

This group use Pages Park for away matches against Brooklands but consider Mentmore Road Memorial Playing Field to be their home.

**Bedfordshire Cricket Club:**

Bedfordshire Cricket Club is the governing body for cricket in Bedfordshire. They feel that Leighton Buzzard is rapidly expanding and there should be enough facilities provided for newcomers and young people to play cricket. It should also be recognised that there is currently a rapid expansion in the playing of cricket by women and girls that places extra demand on existing facilities. They are aware that clubs do pay for the use of existing facilities.

**Leighton Linslade Croquet Club:**

The Croquet Club regularly uses the facilities in Pages Park and has 60 members. They play croquet on the three lawns and have a club room in the rear of the Pavilion and use the toilet facilities. In addition they also use the main Pavilion for meetings, special occasions and winter social club.

They would like to see a larger club room developed and better facilities such as an equipment storage area. They also feel that CCTV should be installed to 'police' the rear of the Pavilion. In addition an asphalt pathway should be continued around the Pavilion. They are a well used Croquet Club and feel that there is a health and safety issue in relation to the public and dog walking activities. They questioned what would happen if Pages Field was built on as their members would have no

where to park. They highlighted that their facilities are used by their membership 7 days a week which brings a lot of people into Pages Park.

**Southcott Village RA FC and Southcott Village RA Youth FC:**

This group uses the football pitches at both Mentmore Road Memorial Playing Fields and Pages Park. They would like to see improved and larger changing facilities. As highlighted above they are happy to work closely with the Town Council to create improved facilities in both parks.

**Leighton and District Sunday League (football):**

Leighton and District Sunday League use the Playing Fields in the winter months for Sunday matches. They would like to see better security for the changing rooms. At present they have no other funding available for improvements. They are concerned that the 'clash' of cricket and football in September needs to be addressed. They feel this could be achieved by staggered kick off times.

**Leighton Buzzard Narrow Gauge Railway Society Ltd:**

The Narrow Gauge Railway Society use Page's Park as a parking area for visitors to the railway and is used with the agreement of Leighton Linlode Town Council. Other usage is restricted to the area defined as Pitch 6 (football). This is used in the summer months for the Society's special events, e.g. vintage vehicles day; sand and motorcycles; motor cycle rally. All of these events require display space as well as supplementary visitor parking and are pre-planned with the Town Council. The Narrow Gauge Railway Society has no further requirements as far as usage of the park but within any future development of the park would like to retain the usage outlined above.

The Society however does have a number of concerns about the park:

- All of the mature trees around the perimeter of the park are secured under a TPO, sadly 3 have been subject to wind damage and have blown down. Two of these incidents happened within three months of each other. One came down across the railway, the other adjacent to the railway. We believe all of these trees are now at the post mature stage of their life i.e. 110 years + and should be given a detailed expert arboreal inspection and survey to determine their relative safety. It follows that any removed following the survey should be replanted with young but well established replacements
- Hedges: those adjacent to the railway to be reduced in height to approx 1.2 metres. This would permit viewing of the trains by those in the park and of activities in the park by passengers on the trains. Those in the Billington Road frontage are badly overgrown and need removal or laying to create a border of 1.2. metres high. These should be maintained to allow Billington

Road travellers to see that there is a park behind the undergrowth. Adjacent to the entrance/exit drive to the railway, the hedges to be removed to permit the widest possible sight lines for exiting vehicles.

- o Fencing adjacent to the railway: this is now over thirty five years old and is in need of replacement/upgrading. It primarily defines the boundary between the park and the railway and is there as a deterrent to children running in front of the train. It was installed by one of our members as a donation to the society.
- Pages Park/Pages Field access: this is in need of upgrading to allow a more direct route from the Sandhills estate. The Society are currently in discussion with Central Bedfordshire Council/Amey as to how this might be implemented to reconcile railway operation with pedestrian/cyclist safety; ensure excellent intervisibility between railway and footpaths; installation of appropriate control barriers adjacent to the railway on both sides to avoid children running in front of the train; similar to those in use at other footpath crossings of the railway line.

### **9.3 Analysis of Findings from public consultation:**

#### **Mentmore Road Memorial Playing Fields**

It is evident from many of the comments received at the consultation events that this is a well used and well regarded park. Residents and park users were invited to tell us via pre printed cards saying "I like this park because" what they like about the park. They indicated that they feel it is a good space for children to run around in and they wouldn't want to see it become over developed because this would be lost. It was also highlighted that it is well maintained and always looks nice and gives the overall impression of being well cared for. Park users indicated that the small children's play area is well used by small children. In addition it provides good sports facilities for children and is a good recreational area for small children during the daytime. It was also highlighted that the range of sports facilities on offer is good for all ages. It is considered to be a safe environment for a very wide range of people to use and is not too managed. It was highlighted that the path is well used making it feel a safe area and has the added attraction of bringing wildlife such as badgers into the area. In addition the fence against Mentmore Road is robust and cannot be broken down by youths with footballs making the park a safe place for younger children. Closing the car park overnight was highlighted as a positive move as it reduces the noise for local residents.

#### **Concerns:**

Residents and park users were able to highlight concerns using pre-printed cards saying "I don't like this park because". Concerns were expressed that no checks are made on the park by the police or PCSO's which means that young people can stay

in the park until late at night drinking and making a noise. One resident expressed concern that when the cricket pitch is roped off they are worried their dog will run into it.

A number of concerns have been expressed by residents living in The Wharf development which overlooks the park. There are 26 apartments that directly overlook the park and residents here repeatedly suffer from noise and abuse. The noise is largely generated by young people kicking footballs against the fence. As the fence is metal it makes a loud noise which can be very frightening to some residents. In addition the balls are frequently kicked over the fence, sometimes landing on the first floor balconies or on a number of occasions during the summer months ending up in resident's apartments. Young people climb the fence to go and retrieve their balls which adds further nuisance to the residents in these dwellings. Complaints have been made to the Town Council about this issue. A 'No Ball Games' sign has been erected along the fence but this has not deterred the activities.

Concerns have been raised about the effect this activity is having on the fence as it is not in a good state of repair. There are holes in the panels and sagging posts, a wavy line of panes and torn netting. Temporary but expensive repairs on ten holes in the panels and strengthening of the posts were carried out at resident's expense. Residents are very concerned about the ongoing cost of repairing the fence aside from the nuisance they experience on a continuous basis in the summer months.

#### **Anti Social Behaviour:**

Comments were made about young people hanging around in the park late in the evening **drinking** and **making a noise**. Residents also complained about incidents of **foul language**. Concerns were raised that young people often hang around the under 5's play area making the younger children feel quite intimidated. It was felt that these problems could be alleviated if more facilities were provided for the young people. It was also highlighted that at times some **vandalism** is caused to the Pavilion especially when young people kick a football at the roof and on the side of the building. Concerns were also raised about young people playing football in the car park causing damage to vehicles. Issues have already been raised earlier in the report about young people kicking a football at the fence that separates the apartments from the park however other residents also identified that other sections of the perimeter fence also get damaged as well as the gate. Residents did highlight that locking the car park in the evenings has had a positive effect on anti social behaviour and noise problems. It was suggested that more frequent **policing** of the park in the summer months could alleviate some of the problems. Suggestions indicated that maybe a **warden** should be employed to deal with problems of anti social behaviour and other problems. It is evident from the comments that these problems are worse in the summer time when young people are in the park until late in the evenings.

**Traffic and Parking Issues:**

Residents living in Mentmore Road highlighted concerns about traffic and parking in their road. Residents feel that having two schools and the station within walking distance cause many of the parking problems during the daytime. They are also concerned that the children and young people who do walk to school have difficulty crossing the road because of the speed that traffic travels along a heavily congested road. They feel that in the evenings the parking problems are largely created by the lack of parking provided in the Wharf development. Residents highlighted that workmen often choose to undertake work on their properties outside of school hours so they are able to park. Concerns were expressed that the volume of cars parking in Mentmore Road reduce the width of the road and make it dangerous for children to cross the road to go to and from the park. A suggestion was made that a crossing should be developed near to the park.

They suggested that a 20mph zone should be implemented and a residents parking scheme developed to prevent commuters from parking there. In addition yellow lines should be installed near to the park to make it safer for children to cross the road. A further suggestion indicated that parking should be banned on Mentmore Road because it restricts the width of the road.

Concerns were also raised by residents living in Mardle Road who also experience parking problems.

**Car Park:**

Concerns have been expressed previously to the Town Council about the problems of young people hanging around and driving their cars in the car park late at night. To overcome these problems the car park is locked at night. Many residents indicated that this has resolved many of the problems they were experiencing. However a few additional problems were highlighted. Concerns were expressed that the gates are sometimes locked when park users are still in the car park. It was suggested that the gates should be locked a bit later. Concerns were also expressed that the gates aren't opened early enough for the people who come fishing on a Sunday morning which means they end up parking in Mentmore Road for the entire day. It was suggested that the gates should be opened at 7a.m. on Sunday mornings to alleviate this problem.

Whilst many residents recognised that locking the gates has had a positive effect for local people a suggestion was made that the car park should be left open so that local residents who can't park in Mentmore Road could park there.

It was highlighted that the upper barrier at the entrance to the car park is an unnecessary feature and prevents footballers who park vans entering the park which results in them having to park in Mentmore Road. It was suggested that the barrier should be removed, but if height problems occur in the future it could be re-instated.

It was also highlighted that some commuters use the car park for daily parking because they don't have to pay.

**Dogs:**

The consultation highlighted that the park is a popular location for dog walkers. Concerns were expressed by park users that many owners do not pick up after their dogs and **dog fouling** is an issue. It was suggested that a **warden** should be employed with part of their role being to ensure that dog fouling is dealt with and the park is kept clean and free from fouling. A suggestion was made that a dedicated **dog walking area** could be developed in the park so that dogs were kept away from other park activities. It was highlighted that there should be more frequent emptying of the **dog bins** in the park and that more should be provided to alleviate the problems.

**Litter:**

It was identified that more **litter bins** are needed in the park. In addition it was suggested that **daily litter picks** by the park keepers should be reinstated. Concerns were expressed that **litter and food** is often left in the Memorial garden area after picnics.

**Improvements:**

**New Pavilion:**

The Pavilion in Mentmore Road Memorial Playing Fields is in need of updating. 10% of the comments made on the ideas cards highlighted the need for a new Pavilion to be built. However some concern was also raised that there would need to be some provision made so that there is a continuity of activities such as the Playschool that meet there each weekday morning. It was suggested that if a new Pavillion is built it should be larger so that a room could be made available for private hire. It was suggested that a new facility should be a multi purpose building with:

- Changing rooms
- Kitchen
- Room(s) for hire
- Use for cricket, football, tennis and bowls
- Accessible toilets with baby changing facilities

However, some suggestions indicated that rather than building a new facility the existing one should be given a complete makeover and be kept well maintained.

It was also suggested that a fenced outdoor area should be created at the pavilion specifically for the use of the preschool children so they had access to a safe outdoor space at all times. It was highlighted that a new building would provide the preschool with better facilities such as more space for reading etc. Concerns were expressed that the existing preschool cannot get internet access because there is no phone line in the pavilion.

It was highlighted that if a new building is developed the design of the building should be of high quality and the profile of the buildings should be kept low so that they won't intrude on the surrounding residential area. Concerns were expressed that a larger building could result in more noise being created.

**Additional activities that could be provided at the pavilion:**

Respondents identified a range of activities that could be provided at the pavilion. Some of these would be achievable in the existing pavilions. Suggestions included:

- A centre for teenagers
- Craft group for women
- Youth club for 9-15 year olds
- A 'youth pub'
- A place for bands to practice
- A café
- Table tennis
- Indoor bowls
- Summer club
- Art and crafts club for children

**Play areas:**

There are currently two play areas contained within the park one for under 5's near the entrance to the park and one for older children at the rear of the park near the canal. It was suggested that the playground for older children needs updating with new equipment. It was highlighted that the play area for under 5's needs to be increased and possibly have a sand pit and fountains. Concern was expressed that the slide in the under 5's playground is difficult to climb. Further suggestions indicated that there is a need for more equipment for the 6-12 age range. It was highlighted that lighting should be installed near the under 5's play area.

A further suggestion indicated that there should be a new facility or a new area developed for young people at the rear of the park maybe utilising the raised canal bank.

**Environmental Improvements:**

It was highlighted that the gate at the rear of the park that leads to the canal/road should be kept clear of overgrown stinging nettles as some residents have to get buggies through here and it is difficult without getting stung.

Suggestions were also made that flowering shrubs should be planted in the park or a community garden or wildflower area could be created. It was also highlighted that a landscaped park area could be developed.

A number of residents suggested that a green gym should be developed in the park, however it was also identified that it should avoid the area where the badgers set is.

Residents would like to see more linkages to the canal created. However it was also highlighted that the trees and shrubs should be retained along the canal side with a fence and should not be opened up.

Suggestions were made that a footpath is needed to run alongside the fence that separates the Wharf development from the park. It was felt that this may alleviate some of the problems that residents currently experience. In addition some residents who live there suggested that a hedge or a fast growing perennial plant should be grown up the fence to 'soften' the noise and stop children climbing over it. It was also suggested that the stream that is currently culverted that runs along here should be opened up as an attractive water feature which would also alleviate the problems that the footpaths cause and could attract additional wildlife into the park.

It was suggested that a footpath is needed at the rear of the park near the canal.

**Lighting:**

Suggestions indicated that lighting should be installed at the rear of the Pavilion near the tennis courts as it is very dark here in the evenings. A suggestion was made that lighting should be installed near the under 5's play area and floodlights should be installed near the football pitches.

**Sports facilities:**

It was highlighted that some hard surface should be created to play ball games and to install a net.

It was also suggested that tennis facilities should be extended to include a tennis wall with a half court for individual practice. In addition it was highlighted that more tennis courts are needed here to meet the demand.

The cricket groups highlighted that vandal proof cricket nets should be installed to encourage more youngsters to play the sport.

A suggestion was made that an all weather surface should be installed to enable sports to be played all year round.

**Additional facilities:**

Respondents suggested that accessible toilet facilities are needed in the park. In addition people feel that a café and picnic area would attract more visitors to the park. A suggestion was made that a large screen should be installed so that people could watch major events such as the Olympics and the Diamond Jubilee.

A number of comments highlighted the need for a youth shelter with WIFI to be installed near the under 5's play area where young people like to gather.

It was also suggested that bandstand concerts should be held in the summer with refreshments provided.

Some concerns were expressed that the park is fine as it is and doesn't need further improvements.

A suggestion highlighted the need to have one person at the Council for residents to contact about any concerns or problems they experience as a result of park usage.

**Pages Park:**

The consultation has highlighted that park users and residents regard Pages Park as a lovely open space that is used by dog walkers, young families, cyclists, walkers and people who bring a picnic for a family day out. It hosts cricket teams and has a well used Croquet Club. There are clubs based at the pavilion. In the winter months the football pitches are used for local league matches at weekends. At times the park is used for major events, some of these are organised by the neighbouring Narrow Gauge Railway Society who attract visitors to the park throughout the year.

When respondents were asked what they liked about the park they highlighted that they like the facilities such as the bowling green and the security of the children's play area. In addition the park offers a wide open undulating space that is considered to be well kept and maintained. It provides an interesting landscape with some very mature trees and is a nice environment to walk in with children and/or with dogs.

It is also apparent that many of the respondents had used the park frequently when their children or grandchildren were small but no longer found a reason to go there.

**Concerns:**

\* It was evident during the consultation that one of the key concerns that residents have is that Pages Park will be built on. Residents were keen to find out if there were plans to build houses on this park, this was probably fuelled by recent plans put forward for Pages Fields.

**Crime and Anti Social Behaviour:**

Noise nuisance and crime were highlighted as key issues of concern. It is apparent that noise nuisance is caused by motor cyclists using the footpath for a short cut or young teenagers learning to ride motor cycles. Because of the large open space the park offers many people use remote controlled cars, planes etc which causes concern to residents living close to the park. The noises created from these particularly in the summer months when people have their windows open appear to be a cause of some concern.

It was highlighted that the seats near the steps act as a magnet for young people to congregate but again the noise they create causes concern to residents who live close by. Residents and park users are concerned about young people congregating in the evening and drinking in the park. It was also identified that incidents of drug dealing have been witnessed in the car park. Vandalism was identified as an issue, the seats near the steps have been vandalised and some residents experience bottles being thrown into their gardens. There have also been incidents of vandalism and graffiti to the Pavilion which concerns the people who use this facility. To overcome this problem it was suggested that a camera should be installed on the Pavilion. It was highlighted that although there is a camera sited on the steps it doesn't seem to deter the problems that occur here. Residents particularly are keen to see greater policing in the park during the evenings, either from the police and PCSO's or by employing a warden to deal with these issues.

Broken glass along the paths and in the play area was highlighted as an issue of concern. Parents of young children and dog walkers were particularly concerned about the dangers this posed.

\* Concerns were also raised by residents about the foul language that occurs when young people are gathering informally and playing football.

**Lighting:**

— The lack of lighting was identified as a key issue for Pages Park. Discussion with the children and young people who attend the youth club in the Pavilion on a Wednesday evening identified this as a concern for them. They are keen to see better lighting provided in the park and also for some of the facilities such as the football pitch to be lit so that they can use it as part of their youth club activities in the winter months. It was also identified that the light on the steps between the park and Chaloner Court doesn't always work.

It was also suggested that if there was improved lighting and vehicle access at night the Pavilion could be better used. Concern was also expressed that the entrance to the park is too dark and too concealed.

**Car Parking:**

The park has car parking facilities at each end. However local residents have complained that there is insufficient parking to meet the demand at key times. Residents living in Oakridge highlighted concerns about the insufficient parking especially when there are football matches in Pages Park because people park in their street and walk across to the park. A number of comments highlighted the need to extend the parking area so that it is sufficient to meet demand.

**Dogs:**

Many respondents highlighted that the park provides good opportunities for dog walking however this does cause additional problems for some park users. Dog fouling was identified as an issue of concern. It was also suggested that a dog free zone should be created in part of the park so that children can run around freely and away from dog fouling. It was also suggested that the under 5's area also needs to be a 'dog free zone'.

To overcome some of the problems it was suggested that more dog bins should be installed in the park to enable owners to clear up after their dogs and that the existing bins should be emptied more regularly as they are often full. Concerns were expressed that there are too many unruly dogs allowed to roam free in Pages Park.

**Footpaths:**

Concerns were expressed that the footpaths are often used by young people riding motorbikes which is an inappropriate activity. It was also highlighted that the footpaths are often covered in mud which is not cleared very frequently. A number of suggestions indicated that a footpath should be created along the edge of the railway line that is accessible to people with disabilities.

**Improvements:**

It was highlighted that the Town Council should do more to promote this park and make people aware of events that are happening there. It was suggested that the park is ideal to house larger events such as an annual music festival (Jam in the park) or other such events. It was felt that larger features could be incorporated into this park that would attract more people to use it. Suggestions included a major water attraction or a boating lake.

Respondents were keen to ensure that this open space is kept particularly because of the concentration of housing that is being built in the town. One resident felt very

strongly that all green spaces should be protected because she felt that "harsh environments create harsh attitudes".

It was also highlighted that access to the park should be improved, especially from the Sandhills Estate as it is currently a long way to walk from there to the park. Access along Billington Road was also raised as a concern because at present the bushes overhang the path making it dangerous for people with buggies and small children to walk along as well as the elderly and frail. Many people mentioned in passing that they feel that the park is hidden from view and needs better signage at both entrances to the park to let people know it is there.

However, at the event in January many people raised concerns about the plans to open up the vista from Billington Road and remove and cut back some of the hedging.

#### **Trees and Shrubs:**

Concern was expressed about the proposals to remove the hedge adjacent to Billington Road, however as has been highlighted above a number of people had raised concerns about the hedge overhanging the pavement and making access difficult. Concerns were expressed that 'shrubbing' the hedgerows would reduce the amount of wildlife in the park.

It was highlighted that an urgent check on all the trees around the perimeter of the park should be carried out as some trees had blown down recently. Residents living close to the park raised concerns that the overhanging branches should be trimmed back as many were overhanging into their gardens.

Suggestions were made that more shrubs and plants should be incorporated into the park and that any trees and hedgerows that get damaged should be replaced. It was also suggested that the edges of the park need tidying up and could be planted with flowering shrubs. Suggestions also included planting wildflowers in some areas of the park and creating a landscaped area or community garden as well. It was also identified that flowering shrubs should be planted near to the children's play area. Further suggestions identified that flower beds could be created to separate the path from the rest of the park. It was felt that the inclusion of more flowers and shrubs would create a more pleasing and tranquil place for people to visit.

#### **The Pavilion:**

The consultation has identified a desire to see more activities organised in the Pavilion. The Pavilion was identified as being a cold and unattractive place that needs improving.

It was suggested that the Pavilion could be extended so that it can increase the opportunities that can be offered there. Residents suggested that the following are needed:

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Leighton Linlade Town Council

- More activities for young people
- Keep fit sessions both indoor and outdoor for Mums with buggies
- Craft group for women
- Indoor croquet facilities
- Bingo sessions (instead of using the bungalow in Richmond Road)
- Martial arts
- Parent and toddler club
- Place for bands to practice
- Non alcoholic pub for young people
- Separate clubroom and storage for Croquet Club
- Yoga classes for children, pregnancy and adults
- Youth theatre
- Summer club
- Art club for children
- Step/aerobics classes
- Indoor bowls
- Indoor sports hall

It was highlighted that greater usage of the Pavilion would reduce the amount of vandalism and be self policing. In addition the volunteers who run the youth club also wanted to see improved cooking facilities in the kitchen so that they can run cooking sessions with the young people and also improved storage facilities.

**Café:**

A number of park users and local residents felt that the park lacked a café facility and if one was incorporated into any improvements it would attract more people to use the park.

**Toilets:**

The lack of toilet facilities was also identified. It was highlighted that when the Pavilion is closed there are no facilities which can put people off staying in the park for very long.

**Play areas:**

During the consultation it was highlighted that there is a need to create more things for children and young people to do in the park. However consultation with the young people who attend the youth club largely highlighted that on the whole they are happy with the park. They were more concerned about the lack of lighting in the park although they did highlight that a mountain bike trail or skateboarding area would improve the park.

It was also highlighted that the children's play areas need updating. Suggestions included installing more challenging play equipment for the 8-14 age ranges. Concerns were expressed that the playground is always wet and the climbing frame, slide and swings are very slippery when wet.

**Youth Shelters:**

The young people we talked to are very aware that local residents who live near to the park feel they cause a nuisance. They currently tend to congregate around the seats near the steps because there is somewhere to sit and there is a light there. They identified that they would like some youth shelters installed in the park that have lighting close by. Ideally they feel these should be sited away from the houses but not so far into the park that it makes them feel vulnerable. They suggested that some youth shelters could be installed near the Pavillion.

**Sports and fitness:**

Concerns were expressed about the condition of the tennis courts and suggestions were made about improving these. It was also highlighted that by improving these facilities it could create an additional revenue stream for the Council to invest back into the park. Young people suggested that the basketball facilities should be improved they are particularly concerned about the condition of the flooring. They would also like to see the current sports facilities lit at night so they can use them as part of their youth club activities.

Suggestions were made to get rid of the football goal posts, and some residents who live close to the park supported the idea of moving the football to Astral Park. However, further comments highlighted the benefits of keeping young people in sport and ensuring that there are a range of facilities available to them locally and suggesting that the sports pitches should not be removed from Pages Park.

It was suggested that a **fitness trail** or **green gym** should be developed in Pages Park as well as a **jogging or running route**. It was also suggested that better **cycling and walking** links should be developed. It was also suggested that a running route be created between Mentmore Road Memorial Playing Fields and Pages Park that has maps and distances recorded.

Suggestions were made about **Pages Field**. It was highlighted that the football facilities here should be improved and upgraded.

## **10. FINDINGS FROM THE STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP**

### **11. CONCLUSIONS**

It was apparent during the consultation events that residents and park users were very concerned about the future of both of these parks and were suspicious that a consultation exercise was being carried out with a view to selling off this land for housing. **It is imperative that a clear message is sent out from the Town Council informing people that there is no intention to build or sell off either of these sites.**

The consultation has included many of the user groups and sports organisations who use the facilities in both of these parks. It is evident that all of the groups have additional needs and some have very ambitious plans for the future. The sports facilities in Mentmore Road Memorial Playing Fields are well used bringing a lot of footfall into the park. It is noticeable that the concerns about anti social behaviour are largely targeted at one area probably as a result of it being a smaller park with a high usage throughout the day and evenings. Any plans for the future would not want to undermine or reduce this usage as it could lead to other problems to be dealt with.

However, it is apparent that many of the groups have a need for greater space and improved facilities. The Linslade Tennis Club need to have access to a pavilion that fully meets their needs and more tennis courts to meet current and anticipated demand in the future. The Bowls Club need to have an improved pavilion and the Cricket Clubs need to have access to improved pavilion facilities. There is also a growing interest from girls and women to play cricket and their needs also have to be accommodated. Limited storage was also highlighted as an issue and there is a need for better changing facilities in this park. All of the clubs are mindful of the rapid expansion in the town and the additional interest that the Olympics will generate in sport after this summer and want to be sure they can accommodate a rising demand in their sports.

The Playschool who have been operating in the pavilion for the last 35 years also need additional space and facilities.

To achieve everyone's needs it is likely to result in less space in the park which local people appear keen to avoid.

The consultation for Pages Park has highlighted that the Croquet Club need a club house and concerns have been raised about the quality of the tennis courts and the basketball court. Similarly to Mentmore Pavilion a need for more and improved storage facilities and better changing rooms have also been highlighted.

Whilst sports facilities should not determine the total future development of these Parks it is crucial that their needs are considered as they attract many people to their activities. It has also been suggested during the consultation that young people need to be encouraged to participate in sports facilities and a good range should be offered in each of the parks.

It would be sensible before any decisions are made about how to improve facilities at both of these parks for a Sports Strategy to be developed for the Town. This could take a more holistic view and look at all the Parks in the Town and decide which facilities are best sited where, what facilities already exist and what improvements need to be made to achieve everyone's aspirations. I would suggest that all of the Sports Clubs and Organisations who have taken the time to take part in this consultation are involved in this process. It is important that this strategy is developed quickly so that organisations that need to develop their plans are not delayed by this process.

Once a strategy is developed a decision can be taken about how to improve both Pavilions. It is important for the Town Council to decide what it wants to do about the future of the Pavilion in Mentmore – whether it is economically viable to improve the existing Pavilion or whether it needs to build a new facility. The development of the sports strategy will help to determine the size required for a facility on this site and who the potential partners could be. Parents and Carers who use the pre-school are concerned that a new build could mean that the existing facility is closed for some considerable time if it were to be built on the same site. It is crucial that the Early Years Team at Central Bedfordshire Council are consulted and involved about any future decisions that may affect the preschool.

Decisions also need to be made about improving or upgrading the Pavilion in Pages Park. At present this appears to be underused but there are needs from some of the sports groups for improved storage, changing and clubroom facilities. In addition members of the public have suggested a range of activities that could be offered in the Pavilion to increase its usage including more youth facilities. The youth club who currently operate there have identified that they need a working cooker and improved kitchen area so that they can organise some cooking sessions with the young people who regularly attend the group.

Anti social behaviour was identified as an issue in both parks and is largely concentrated at specific locations. In Mentmore the fence in front of the Wharf development is one of the main focuses as well as the Pavilion. Previously there had been some nuisance that occurred in the car park but much of this has been alleviated by the locking of the gates overnight. The main issue of concern is a group of young people who play football against the fence. The force with which they kick the ball at the fence causes noise nuisance to residents. Added to this when the balls are kicked over the fence the young people climb the fence to retrieve them. Continuous damage is being caused to the fence which residents find

themselves having to pay to put right. There are a number of possible solutions to this problem.

In the short term it could be possible to plant a hardy flowering shrub or hedge along the fence however this would have to be quite well established before it is planted otherwise it could be damaged and will take too long to become effective. Another solution could be to put an angled mesh top to the fence to stop the young people from climbing over it.

Other solutions could include installing a 'kick wall' away from the fence facing into the park itself, however this would need to be made of strong hard wearing material that doesn't make a loud noise when a ball is kicked at it.

A long term solution could lie in the hands of Central Bedfordshire Council who as part of the canal quarter development have plans to install another bridge over the canal that would enable a cycle route to be developed. However the potential route from the bridge is through the middle of the Wharf development which may not be acceptable to residents living there. An alternative could be to site the bridge so that it leads cyclists directly into Mentmore Road Memorial Playing Fields and then takes them along a cycle path directly abutting to the fence in question. This would discourage young people from kicking a ball at the fence because people would be walking or riding along that path particularly at key times of the day and evening. It is likely that whatever solution is developed will not totally discourage this activity but may alleviate the problem. The Wharf development now has a Management Group made up of local residents who are happy to continue to discuss this issue with the Town Council.

Similarly the anti social behaviour highlighted in Pages Park is largely focussed around the Pavilion and near the steps that lead down to Chaloner Court. Residents from there suffer from noise nuisance, bottles being thrown into their gardens and a close proximity to foul language particularly in the summer months. Some of the young people who sit there identified that they are drawn to that area because there is lighting and seats available. They have indicated that they would like some youth shelters installed in the park that have lighting. It would be sensible to site these near to the Pavilion which was also suggested by the young people, this would hopefully draw them away from the seats near to the steps. It may be sensible to remove the seat near to the steps and site it in a different location.

Concerns were expressed about access into Pages Park. Residents living on the Sandhills estate have indicated that they have to walk a long way to get to the park. Concern was also expressed about the problems that people encounter when they are trying to walk along Billington Road near the Park with young children and buggies because of the overgrown bushes. Some improvements have been proposed by Central Bedfordshire Council at a consultation in January which brought about a mixed reaction from residents, many of them using our consultation to

highlight their concerns. The main concerns are about the removal of some of the hedges to make access easier, and open up the visibility to the park.

It is apparent from the consultation that many people appreciate the trees in Pages Park, however concerns were expressed about the safety of some of the old trees and 2 or 3 of them have fallen down recently. Residents were very vociferous in letting us know that they feel any trees that have to be taken down should be replaced.

Parking in both parks was highlighted as a concern. Residents living in Mentmore Road took the opportunity to highlight their concerns about the number of people who park in Mentmore Road, largely they believe them to be commuters who park and then walk to the station, people attending the two schools that are sited in Mentmore Road and residents from the Wharf development who have insufficient parking on site to meet demand. It was also highlighted that whilst the locking of the gates at night has alleviated the problems that were being experienced they are not unlocked early enough for the fishermen on Sunday mornings resulting in them having to park in Mentmore Road and Mardle Road. In addition the height barrier means that people who attend the football in vans and high vehicles are not able to enter the car park and ultimately park in Mentmore Road and surrounding streets.

Concerns were expressed by residents living near Pages Park that the car parking contained in the park is insufficient to meet demand, particularly on Sunday mornings when football games are being played. This causes problems for residents living in the surrounding streets because people park there. It was suggested that the car park should be extended to meet the demand.

Many people believe that both parks would benefit from a café and toilets. Once decisions are made about the Pavilions then this could be looked at. If a new Pavilion is going to be built in Mentmore then maybe it could incorporate some toilets that can be accessed from outside but don't give people access to the inside of the building. If a café facility is to be developed could this be done via a mobile facility at key times or by someone developing a facility on both sites?

It is evident that for many of the people who attended the consultation they are happy with the parks as they currently are apart from some of the key issues that we highlighted. Many people do not want to see the spaces over developed and like them having some open space and opportunities for informal activities. Some improvements have been highlighted to improve the play facilities in both parks and to make some environmental improvements such as more planting and flower beds. Suggestions were made for events such as a music festival and having bands playing in the parks during the summer months that would increase the usage of them.