



Present: Councillor Joanna Symons, Councillor John Tompkins, Jacky Bannerman (Parish Clerk), Carolyn Filmer, Nigel Cornwell, Bob Jones, Lisa Carter, Peter Maynard, Bryony Maynard.

01. Welcome

Joanna Symons welcomed those present to the meeting. It was agreed that a Chairman for the Working Group will be considered at the next meeting.

02. Apologies for Absence Apologies were received from Graham Bannerman, Robert Lee, Gill Orford, Brian Cumming and Pam Seear

03. General Discussion

General discussion regarding the reason the school agreement has been terminated. Peter & Bryony Maynard questioned why more efforts had not been made to continue the relationship with the school. With the huge amount of money it is going to cost to create a new playground at Bell Meadow, surely it would be better to continue this relationship.

It was explained that the conclusion of the School and the Parish Council after a year of negotiations and looking into lots of different options was that the agreement is no longer viable and has been terminated. Information on this can be found in the Parish Council minutes and notes were included in the Parish Magazine. The working party has been formed to look into the possibility of creating a new playground on Bell Meadow which is land in the ownership of the Parish Council. It was acknowledged that the project is likely to be costly but with fundraising and grant funds it is hoped that it can be achieved.

04. Questionnaire to the village – Update from Cllr. Tompkins and Cllr. Symons

A draft questionnaire was distributed and comments invited.

- Altering the introduction.
- Include a question regarding How often would you use it? E.g. Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Never
- Change Question 5 to include wording which explains inclusive (i.e. of all ages and abilities)
- Not sure if people will understand the differences between the types of equipment in Q5
- Data Protection - Q8 should be on a separate sheet so that this information can be removed.
- Possible questions regarding the location of the playground – Top/Middle/Bottom etc Although this has not been decided and is something to be considered in the future.
- Printing in colour (Jacky to ask Sarah/Lisa)
- Include Seating/picnic area

It was agreed that the next version of the questionnaire will be distributed to the committee via email for final comments and should be distributed mid-January (by team of volunteers split into different parts of the village) and collected 1 week later.

05. Charitable Status or Working Party of the Parish Council

Jacky reported on research carried out on the advantages/disadvantages of Charitable Status.

- Consider that the Parish Council are already known and trusted publicly.
- As a charity you will not pay VAT on some goods and services. But research found that this is not suitable for the playground project as it's not a building and does not fall into any of the other zero rate categories). The Parish Council can reclaim the VAT.
- The Parish Council is already required to comply with various regulatory measures regarding funding and complies with Transparency Code Rules.

- A separate bank account will be opened in order to keep any Playground monies separate. This will be included in the Parish Council accounts which are subject to audit.
- In conclusion I have not found any information that would suggest there being any great benefit from being a Charity.
- There would also be complications (which I have not researched) regarding the land belonging to the Parish Council and then being leased to the Playground charity.

06. Equipment/Suppliers Update

Lisa Carter reported on her research into different playground companies and the equipment they can supply.

- She distributed sheets with pictures and mocked up plans and indicated that a few carefully chosen pieces of equipment needn't be too costly and could be provided from about £25K upwards. (plus the groundworks and surface).
- Surfaces will need looking into, bark or grass were suggested as a cheaper options.
- Lisa looked at a selection of different types of playground equipment including timber and metal - there being pros and cons for each including life span/vandalism/aesthetics.
- There are many examples of timber playgrounds which would look good in our rural setting. There is a new playground at Mersea which is a good example of this.
- Playground companies also offer maintenance contracts.
- A Commercial Insurance company could be used to cover the installation which could then be done by local volunteers so long as it was installed to required safety standards. This could be a real community project and give a level of ownership. The practicalities of this would have to be carefully considered. Although it was considered that groundworks and fencing which would be a significant part of the budget, could be done by local volunteers.
- Lisa indicated that the playground companies are willing to attend meetings and provide ideas and give funding advice.
- It may also be possible to start off moderate and then add equipment when budget allows in different phases.
- The question of VAT needs checking as some thought it would be eligible as a new build project and others thought the rules had changed and it would not be in a nil rate category. Nigel will check this. The Parish Council will be able to reclaim the VAT although enough funds would have to be in place in order to afford initial outlay.

07. Grants/Deadlines Update

Jacky reported on research undertaken regarding grant funding. There are numerous funds available that the Parish Council can apply. The majority of them either have a rolling programme or multiple deadlines through the year. Awards range from a few thousand pounds up to £100,000. There is also an Essex Crowdfunding scheme which is supported by Essex County Council and can provide match funding up to £5k. These may be a good way of generating funds from within the village community, along with fundraising events.

There are a number of criteria which need to be demonstrated in the application process including providing evidence for an established need, community consultation and support etc. Jacky will send the notes to John and Jo so that the criteria will be checked against the questionnaire.

Nigel said that he had been in discussions with the Bell Meadow Village Association regarding possible funding. Jacky noted the close links that the Parish Council has with the BMVA and that funding options from the BMVA would be discussed with them.

08. Terms of Reference

This to be discussed further with Parish Council and brought to the next Working Group meeting.

09. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting will be on Tuesday 20th February at 8pm in Women's Club.

11. Meeting closed at 9.20pm