

**AMENITIES MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Held on Monday 29 February 2016**

**At 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall**

**Present:**

Councillor: Mrs B J Churchill (Chairman)

Councillors: Dr S E Bartington C Holliday  
C Brown J S King  
H B Eaglestone D Temple  
A D Harvey

Non Committee Member: A K Beames P Dorward

Officers: Town Clerk Works Contracts Supervisor  
Responsible Financial Officer Democratic Services Officer  
Facilities Manager

Also present: 1 member of the public

A091 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

A092 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllrs Churchill and Brown declared interests in agenda items 12 and 13 as they were the Town Council's elected representatives on the West Witney Sports and Social Club. Cllr Churchill also declared an interest in item 11. – verbal report from the Public Halls Committee held earlier that evening – as she was a trustee of the Witney Corn Exchange Trust.

A093 **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** to adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Amenities Committee held on 7 December 2015.

A094 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 DECEMBER 2015**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2015 to be discussed at the meeting.

A095 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Coleville wished to address the Committee on a proposal for a new hedge at The Leys. He explained that he and his wife walked around The Leys regularly. He felt that The Leys was more important to Witney than Church Green and there was an eclectic variety of activities happening there. He explained that if one was to walk from Church Green to The Leys, there

were beautiful trees all around apart from the south west corner, where the maintenance depot was situated. He felt this was an eyesore and a blot on the landscape.

He proposed a 20 yard beech hedge to run between the corner of the pavilion and the depot. The hedge would shield the depot. He had looked into the cost and thought it would not be terribly expensive – probably under £250. It would be easy to maintain and would disguise the eyesore of the depot. He would be happy to meet members on site to explain the situation further.

A member commented that he liked the idea but the Council needed to consider the height of a hedge (if one was installed) to deter youth from gathering there and behaving anti socially. If the hedge was to be put in he suggested that it follow the line of the existing chain link fence.

Mr Coleville was thanked for his attendance and he left the meeting.

*At this point the Chairman advised that agenda item 11 would be taken next in order that the Chairman of the Public Halls Sub Committee could address the meeting and then depart.*

A096 **MINUTES OF SUB COMMITTEES – VERBAL REPORT FROM THE PUBLIC HALLS SUB COMMITTEE HELD EARILER THAT EVENING**

The Chairman of the Public Halls Sub Committee summarised the difficult situation with the Trust. The Committee had proposed to meet with the Trust firstly on an informal basis. There had also been recommendations to seek further quotes for a replacement flue at Burwell Hall and to agree to a survey for installation of a hearing loop at the Corn Exchange and for a Display Energy Certificate to be carried out at the Corn Exchange.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the verbal report of the meeting held earlier in the evening be noted.

*Cllrs Dorward and King left the meeting at 6.17pm.*

A097 **PROGRESS ON IMPROVEMENTS AND REPAIRS SINCE LAST MEETING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Works Contracts Supervisor, who circulated photos to show what the Works team had been doing. These items included installation of a knee rail at The Leys and work at Rowan Cottage. The memorial safety testing would start soon at Tower Hill Cemetery. A member asked if unsafe stones would be laid down. The Works Contracts Manager explained that if there were a lot that might need laying down, he would make a site visit to inspect them first.

A member expressed his pleasure at the installation of the knee rail at The Leys. He asked if double yellow lines could be painted in this area. The Town Clerk replied that this would be down to highways as they owned the tarmac. The Works Contracts Manager commented that once the knee rail installation was completely finished, parking bays would be marked up on the other side of the road.

A member noted from the report that valley tiles had been replaced at Burwell Hall, and asked if this was due to kids climbing on the roof. It was confirmed that it was – the kids used the cigarette bin to climb onto the roof. He commented that it was a shame the

pyracantha had been removed as this had, in the past, been planted to deter such incidents. It was confirmed that anti-climb paint was already in use.

The member thought the team had done well and congratulated them.

New goal posts were needed and a rolling programme of replacement was proposed. The Town Clerk had received a letter of thanks from Reuben Leather who had asked for a goal to be moved from Eton Close to Quarry Road.

The Works Contracts Manager explained work had been done to a hedge on Curbridge Road which had been met with a mixed reaction from residents. He had spoken to many of them but an area of hedge had been left as a resident had been particularly aggressive to him.

There was anti-social behaviour at the Skate Park where the half pipe opened at the end. This could be blocked off at a cost of £700.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the report be noted;
- 2) that the skate park ramps are blocked in at a cost of £700;
- 3) that the rolling programme to replace goalposts is put in place;
- 4) that future consideration of a budget is given for repair of paths at West Witney Bowls Club;
- 5) that funds are vired to cover the memorial testing at Tower Hill Cemetery.

A098 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO as circulated with the agenda.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the report be noted.

A099 **LAKE AND COUNTRY PARK – GRAZING RIGHTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager as circulated with the agenda. She explained that it was time to revisit the licence for grazing the council's land. She showed the Committee photos of the fields and it was clear that they were in bad condition. This was mainly due to the rain and sometimes the footpath was impassable.

A member wanted to know why the cattle had been there longer this year and the Facilities Manager explained that they had not been removed on time. This had been due to the grazier having problems meaning that the usual barn could not be prepared. The cattle had left in January and not November. The member thought that the land looked like it needed a rest.

The Facilities Manager also highlighted the fact that there was a significant ragwort problem and this was down to the tenant to deal with. It was only a problem if cattle were grazed on the land. She did not think the tenant would be able to afford to do the work. The Works Contracts Manager said that there was work to be done to the fencing and the footpath would need reinstating.

Members discussed the issues and felt that the land needed time to recover and that perhaps a new tenant should be sought. During the year of rest the grazing rights could be reviewed.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the land is rested for a year, during which time grazing rights are reviewed. The land should be advertised for grazing in a year's time.

A100 **LEYS RECREATION GROUND**

a) **Damage to fence of property at Buttercross Lane Due to Vehicles Turning/Reversing on the Leys**

The Committee received and considered a letter from a resident of Buttercross Lane whose garden fence was being regularly hit by vehicles turning round – presumably to access Town Council facilities. There had been a suggestion to put planters in front of the fence which the resident would maintain.

Members queried who owned the land as if it belonged to OCC Highways permission would be needed.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the ownership of the land be established and brought back to the Committee.

b) **Works Depot – Request for Screening**

Having listened to the resident who had addressed the Committee earlier that evening, members tended to agree with concerns that had been expressed about anti-social behaviour. The Works Contracts Supervisor suggested that the fence could be moved further forward and the hedge could be put right up against it. This would prevent anyone climbing the fence.

**RECOMMENDED:** that officers obtain a price for moving the fence and installing a hedge and report back to the next meeting.

c) **Splash Park – Maintenance of Grassed Areas**

The area around the splash pad had become extremely muddy. The officers had obtained quotes to lay artificial turf with drainage. These varied from £9,000 to cover the worst areas to £31,000 for substantial coverage.

The alternative option was for the works team to top the worst areas up with bark chipping, but this wouldn't last long.

There was a mid-range quotation for £17,000 that the Works Contracts Manager thought would be a good option.

The RFO reminded members that there was no budget provision for this. She suggested that a temporary fix could be done and the project be put into next year's budget. There was also the option to explore grant funding. Members discussed this and thought this might be the most sensible option.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the works team carries out a temporary fix using bark to top up the worst areas and money is put into the budget for the next year. In the meantime, officers could look into possible grant funding.

d) **Continuation of Footpath Across the Football Field**

Further to previous Committee discussions of this matter, the Town Clerk had received a letter from WODC confirming that the Town Council would not receive any of the New Homes Bonus Money. The letter suggested applying for a grant, although this was not possible for another two years as the Town Council had already received a grant for the Splash Park. There was therefore no possibility of the path across the football pitch being continued.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the correspondence from WODC be noted.

A101 **BURIAL RECORDS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO as circulated with the agenda. She explained that some of the old burial books were quite fragile and that they were now all stored in acid free paper in archive boxes. All records were available on the computer for staff to use. St. Luke's was the County archive but all books would remain the property of the Council and could be returned at any time. She advised that Faringdon Town Council had just sent their books to the archive. Members thought this was an excellent idea.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the burial registers as listed in the report of the RFO be archived with the Oxfordshire History Cemetery (St. Luke's).

A102 **WITNEY LAWN TENNIS CLUB – REQUEST FOR RENT REDUCTION/COMPENSATION**

The Tennis Club had submitted a request for a reduction in rent but had not submitted audited accounts. The Chairman requested that the item be deferred and the Tennis Club be asked to submit a set of properly audited accounts to accompany the request.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the item be deferred and the Tennis Club be asked to submit a set of properly audited accounts to accompany the request for rent reduction.

A103 **WEST WITNEY BOWLS CLUB SIGN**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Works Contract Supervisor as circulated with the agenda. West Witney Bowls Club had requested permission to install a sign to the side of the facility alongside the disabled access ramp. The location had been inspected by the Works Contracts Manager who was happy with it.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the Council grant permission for the sign to be installed

A104 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:** that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted

A105 **WITNEY TOWN BOWLS CLUB – LEASE AND VALUATION**

The Committee received and considered the confidential correspondence from the Council's land and property agent, Alder King, as circulated with the agenda. The correspondence included the fee for a valuation of the land in order to ascertain a valuation for land rental purposes.

The Town Clerk advised that during lease negotiations the WTBC had put forward a rental figure. After some discussion members felt that the Town Council should accept the rent offered, which would be in line with the rent to the other bowls club.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the sum suggested by the Witney Town Bowls Club as rent is accepted.

---

The meeting closed at 7.25pm.

---

Chairman