

completely to non-plot holders. Mr Fenton invited members to have a look at the allotment site.

Members had concerns that the footpath may in fact now be a right of way as it had been used as such for so many years. The Allotment Association had recorded by camera 143 movements per week – this proved how much the path was used. The Facilities Manager concurred that the path may well be a right of way and this would have to be taken into account.

Mr Ashton – 5 Vanner Road

Mr Ashton wished to address the Committee about agenda item 8 – Access to amenity land at Vanner Road. The amenity land had been established when the estate had been built. He believed as the landowners the Town Council had a duty of care to ensure the safety of the area. The private access created by his neighbour had no benefit to any other resident of Vanner Road but could pose a risk. No one knew who might buy no. 3 in the future.

After the gate was installed garden equipment had been delivered through it. This was something that could continue. As long as the gate was there, the risk remained. Mr Ashton wanted the Town Council to physically prevent no 3 accessing the land by the rear gate. The Planning Department at the District Council had suggested that as land owners, the Town Council should bring the matter under control.

Mr Sapwell – 3 Vanner Road

Mr Sapwell apologised to the Town Council for putting in the gate at the rear of his garden without permission. The pillar on the boundary wall had been broken and whilst repairing this he had thought he could provide a direct access onto the amenity land for his children. He had submitted a pre planning application and had been told by the District Council that planning permission was not required. He said that he believed he had been acting legally when installing the gate, and he was not in the habit of doing things without permission.

Mr Sapwell agreed that he had had turf delivered and had left bricks and debris outside the gate for a while. He had consulted with his neighbours whose properties bordered the amenity area and had no objections. He had therefore been very surprised 6 months on to receive a letter from the Town Council asking him to brick up the access. He wanted to assure the Council that he had not knowingly done anything wrong and he was therefore now asking for retrospective permission for the gate.

A492 EVENTS REPORT

The Committee received and considered part one of the report of the Facilities Manager as circulated with the agenda.

Members discussed the issue of staff accumulating TOIL due to working at large scale events outside core hours and the impact it had on Council's services when staff took the time back. The Facilities Manager pointed out that a lot of events were civic and therefore non-chargeable – e.g. Remembrance Day and Christmas Lights.

A member felt that overtime should be paid rather than giving TOIL. The Town Clerk advised that this was something that the Personnel Committee should look at. She added that the

suggested charges for large events was only for internal consideration and asked that there be flexibility for staff to adjust these appropriately.

Part two of the Facilities Manager's report provided information on requests for events for next year. The Committee looked at each event in turn.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report and the implication of the accumulation of TOIL be noted;
2. that the staffing issues be referred to the Personnel Committee to consider;
3. that the following events be agreed for the next year: Music Festival; Liven Up the Leys (formally Jazz Festival) – subject to a change of date so that it did not fall the weekend after the Music Festival; and the Harvest Moon Festival.

A493 **ALLOTMENTS**

The Committee received and considered the Officers reports as circulated with the agenda.

1. *Car Parking and Land Purchase at Lakeside Allotments and Lakeside Visit Report*

Members had visited the site and were not happy with plots being concreted over to provide car parking, although they did not object to a temporary surface being installed. They were very concerned with the overall condition of the allotments as many of them seemed unkempt. The Democratic Services Officer commented that she had spoken to the Allotment Association Secretary who was having problems letting allotments despite having 110 people on the waiting list. She herself had been struggling to let two plots at Park Road since the Spring. There were 11 vacant lots in the Town in total and little interest from those on the waiting list.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that existing parking areas should be cleared of items preventing their use by the allotment association;
2. that the allotment association can construct a store on the existing concrete base from the previous structure if one is required;
3. that the use of allotments 1 and 26 should not be converted to hard standing although a temporary surface may be put down so that it can easily be converted back to allotment land;
4. that any conversion to temporary hard standing be funded entirely by the Allotment Association;
5. that the Allotment Association be forwarded the Committee's concerns about the condition of some plots, in order that they can take appropriate steps to manage the site. The Association should contact everyone on the waiting list to ascertain if they are still willing to take on an allotment.

2. *Newland Allotments*

The Committee received and considered the correspondence as circulated with the agenda and Mr Fenton's address at the start of the meeting. Members were of the opinion that even if the path was not a right of way, people would still use it. They also considered householders would not favour having a path running along the back of their properties, especially if there was vandalism and anti-social behaviour. It was agreed that other methods should be used to try to combat the vandalism, including new signage and contacting the schools about the school children.

RECOMMENDED: that a new pathway would not be considered at present and that other methods should be tried first to combat vandalism and anti-social behaviour. e.g. signage.

A494 **PLAY AREAS REPORT**

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

She highlighted the Park Road Play Area Consultation report demonstrated there was a strong demand for a play area. Unfortunately there was no budget currently to install this. The Facilities Manager commented that OFPA (Oxfordshire Playing Fields Association) was currently trying to arrange a play event in the Fieldmere area.

Members noted the update on the possibility of the Town Council taking on responsibility for Unterhaching copse but the commuted sum offered by the District was not enough. It was agreed to take on the play area only for the commuted sum of £5,500, as previously agreed.

The Play Day at The Leys had gone very well and the Committee wished to extend its thanks to Mrs Deb Benn and her parents, who had done a wonderful job of selling cakes to raise funds for the Splash Park.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report of the Facilities Manager be noted which included the outcome of the Park Road consultation;
2. that the copse at Unterhaching Park should not be adopted but the play area would be accepted for the commuted sum of £5,500;
3. that the request by the Rotary Club of Witney for use of Oxlease open space as overflow car parking be agreed, subject to the necessary health and safety and risk assessments being in place.

A495 **ACCESS TO AMENITY LAND AT VANNER ROAD**

The Committee considered correspondence as circulated with the agenda and the comments made by the resident and his neighbour at the beginning of the meeting. The Facilities Manager confirmed that installing gates to access amenity land was not unusual in that locality. She felt that Mr Sapwell had taken every reasonable step to do the right thing

when he installed the gate. Members had sympathy with Mr Sapwell but were concerned about setting a precedent and also what might arise if the house was sold in future.

RECOMMENDED: that the decision on the future of the gate be deferred until members had made a site visit before the next meeting.

A496 **CEMETERIES REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager as circulated with the agenda. A member was concerned at large funerals held recently that had arrived very late at the cemetery. The Facilities Manager explained that Officers would be working on a protocol in order to lay down guidance on such funerals. However she did inform that these recent incidences had incurred extra charges.

Members noted the update on St. Mary's Church. With regard to the lighting the Town Clerk explained that she had applied to the Town Hall Charity for funding to help with the cost of the repairs, which had been unbudgeted.

Cllrs M J C Curry and Eaglestone declared a non-prejudicial interest in this item as they were both Town Council nominees on the Town Hall Charity.

The Facilities Manager drew members' attention to the memorial testing works, which was unbudgeted apart from £4,000 which would cover only a small portion of the work. The memorials at Holy Trinity were being reassessed as the ground had sunk and some had been reported as becoming unstable. All those that were unstable at Tower Hill had been laid flat.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report of the Facilities Manager be noted;
2. that the burial charges for 2015/16 be increased by 15%;
3. that the Policy for Memorial Trees and Benches be agreed;
4. that graves can only be reserved at Tower Hill by a family wishing to bury in the immediate future;
5. that the budget amounts and strategy for the memorial stability project be noted.

A497 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

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

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted and any feedback on the format of the financial report be passed on to the RFO after the meeting.

A498 **LEYS SPLASH PARK WORKING PARTY**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Splash Park Working Party held on 1 and 15 October 2014 as circulated with the agenda.

The Facilities Manager was in the process of drawing up the tender documents, with a view to awarding the contract at the end of February. However, everything depended on obtaining all the funding required.

RECOMMENDED: that the minutes as detailed be noted.

A499 **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS WORKING PARTY MINUTES**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Christmas Lights Working Party held on 8 and 18 September 2014, as circulated with the agenda. It was noted that the Advent Fayre had been moved to 30 November 2014.

In answer to a Members question regarding an event to turn the Christmas Tree lights on, the Town Clerk understood that the Witney Round Table were currently in dialogue with the District Council about how to facilitate this, and she advised that the Officers had so far supported the organisation with provision of event plans etc.

RECOMMENDED: that the minutes as detailed be noted.

A500 **CORRESPONDENCE TO NOTE**

The Committee received and considered correspondence as circulated with the agenda which praised the hard work of the Ranger. It was agreed that he had made a real difference this year.

RECOMMENDED: that the correspondence be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm

Chairman