

AMENITIES COMMITTEE OF WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

**Held on Monday 30 June 2014
At 6pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Witney**

Present

Councillor: Ms M J C Curry (Chairman to 6.35pm)
Mrs B C Churchill (Chairman from 6.35pm)

Councillors: Mrs J C Baker D S Enright
N Buckle J S King
H B Eaglestone A D Harvey

Officers: Town Clerk Facilities Manager
Communications & Events Officer
Committee Clerk

Others present: 4 members of the public

Prior to the start of the meeting, the Chairman wished to express her sympathy and condolences to the family and friends of the young girl fatally injured in a serious accident that had occurred in Witney earlier in the day. She requested that, on behalf of the Mayor, the Town Clerk writes to the family and Henry Box School, also expressing their sympathies for the two other girls who were injured. The Mayor, Members, Officers and members of the public present endorsed these sentiments. The Chairmen called for a short period of reflection before commencing the meeting.

A289 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

A290 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

A291 MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2014 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

A292 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Lesley Senter was attending with regard to agenda item 6 – Operational Report – specifically relating to Park Road play area. She commented that residents would like to keep the area as a play area and was pleased that the committee had the opportunity to debate this again. She was pleased that the Facilities Manager’s report contained an additional option to enable the area to be retained as a community area rather than just an allotment site. She highlighted that there was already an allotment site in one corner of the road, with a site in the opposite corner having already been sold for development. The residents were concerned that the roadway was not a safe place for children to play and as a community they would like to keep the existing play area for community use, and to ensure their

children had a safe place to play. She considered that the Facilities Manager had come up with a very good idea and was sure that some of the residents would be willing to help this idea come to fruition.

(Councillor Enright entered the meeting at this point, being 6.05pm)

Lesley Senter advised that she had also spoken to Cottsway, as owners of the land and understood that they would be contacting the Facilities Manager. She concluded by saying that the park area had been in place as long as the houses and that it would be a shame to lose it.

A293 RANGERS REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager, as circulated with the agenda. The Town Clerk confirmed that the report would be available on the website in order to alert residents of what was happening, and to bring an awareness of the actions and costs incurred by the Town Council.

A Member commented that the report demonstrated the position of Ranger was needed, and she was pleased to see that it was working well. The Facilities Manager confirmed that the list of vandalism was sent to the police, she had also tried to encourage the Witney Gazette to report the vandalism and had suggested a weekly “Ranger” column – this idea had not been taken up to date, however, she would persist with the idea.

The Committee discussed the temporary position of Ranger, making it permanent, and the requirement for additional help during the school holidays in order that more daylight hours could be covered on a shift system to increase the level of protection for property, assets and people. They considered that this could reduce the amount of vandalism, theft and destruction of property, therefore becoming self-financing.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that the Finance & General Purposes Committee considers the possibility of making the Ranger a full time permanent position.
- 3) that the Finance & General Purposes Committee considers the appointment of a temporary part time assistant to help the Ranger during the summer months.

A294 OPERATIONAL REPORT

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

The Facilities Manager reiterated the Council’s previous recommendation for the transfer of Unterhaching Park without responsibility for the street lighting and boundary wall. Further discussions had taken place with regard to the copse and she was recommending the adoption of this as part of the transfer, on condition that there were no outstanding works. She reminded Members that there would be receipt of a one-off sum of £5,000 on transfer for maintenance and repairs of the play equipment, but no budget for additional items or new equipment.

The Facilities Manager confirmed that she was working with officers from the District Council for a combined play strategy for West Witney, which included the Raleigh Crescent site, the planned play area for the North Curbridge development and a second smaller site. This gave the opportunity to consider the location of the new adventure play area and the possible relocation of the Raleigh Crescent play area. The Facilities Manager commented that it was advisable to consider the options now rather than spending rashly on the existing site. Members discussed the possibilities with the Facilities Manager advising of the siting options and funding.

(Councillors Ms M J C Curry and J S King left the meeting at this point, being 6.35pm. Councillor Mrs B J Churchill took chair)

With regard to Park Road play area, the report contained further information resulting from the committee vision discussion at the previous committee meeting. The Facilities Manager had come up with a third option to provide a large community allotment bed, with suitable DDA access and an area for local children to grow their own food. It would also include a large seating area for residents to enjoy. She foresaw the area being used by local residents for community events, giving them the opportunity to “take back” the area and use it for fund raising activities, with some of the residents becoming key holders for the site.

The Facilities Manager confirmed that there was no money in the budget for the play area, however, there was money available for use on allotments. She suggested that, with the proposal for Raleigh Crescent play area under consideration, there was the opportunity to consider the use of the two items of equipment already purchased and to divert the available funds to Park Road play area. She advised that she intended to lobby Cottsway and other associations for grant funding.

The Committee discussed the options and thought the new idea could work extremely well, and if successful could be a matrix for other similar areas in the future. They particularly liked the idea of children and adults in the same area, at the same time, providing security and also giving children the opportunity see food being produced and harvested.

The Chairman queried whether there had been a feasibility study or consultation with residents. The Facilities Manager confirmed she had not got very far with Cottsway and would need to consult with residents. The Chairman suggested it would be for the residents to call their own residents meeting.

The Facilities Manager commented that it would be a good idea to commission a professional plan, including the benches and landscaping and arrange a consultation once this was in place. She envisaged the costs for this would be approximately £250. She considered that the Teddy Bear’s picnic at Burwell on 30th July would be a good opportunity for consultation with children.

The Facilities Manager’s report contained details of the transfer of other play areas to the Town Council. She commented that the Council needed to watch what they were taking responsibility for, as there was no provision in the budget for an increase in maintenance costs.

(Councillor N Buckle and one member of the pubic left the meeting at this point, 6.50pm)

The Community Café in the Leys Pavilion had attracted a number of approaches from organisation to raise money for various causes. The report included details of a proposal from local youth workers to use the pavilion for targeted youth work intervention. The Facilities Manger considered that this fitted in with the vision for this facility.

The Facilities Manager outlined the current position with regard to the wall at St Mary's Church. She recommended that the work be carried out, which would mean that the Town Council accepted responsibility for this part of the wall for the future. She confirmed that the church believed that the Town Council had responsibility for this maintenance.

The Facilities Manager confirmed that she would be very vigilant in future and would expect proven responsibility via deeds and a planned agreement with the church. Work would be on individual tasks as they occurred and when funds were available. In answer to a question, she confirmed that the Town Council was responsible for headstone stability but not conservation.

The Committee noted the request to provide a handrail in Tower Hill Cemetery. The Facilities Manager warned that a complete handrail would block off access to many of the graves, and possibly create other problems. The Facilities Manager confirmed that this was the only request received and she had not investigated the costs involved. She also advised that she was trying to form "Friends of" groups for both Tower Hill and Windrush cemeteries, at present this was proving difficult. A Member wondered whether an intermittent rail would suffice.

Additional to her report, Facilities Manager advised Members of a very advantageous offer she had received for a piece of play equipment at the Leys. Although the planning department couldn't give an official opinion at this stage, given the height of the trees she considered that it would not create any problems. She had also negotiated the design in neutral colours. The Facilities Manager advised that although the official order would not need to be placed until September, a decision was needed with some urgency to secure this multi functional unit, which was being offered at a very good price, including fitting.

The Town Clerk advised that under the Council's financial regulations, the cost of this item required three quotations, however, as this was a bespoke piece of play equipment, the Committee could agree to waive the financial regulations.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the report be noted.
- 2) that all Members be advised of the request for volunteers to assist with the Teddy Bear Picnic open day at Burwell on 30 July 2014.
- 3) that the adoption of the copse at Unterhaching Park be agreed.
- 4) that the use of the Raleigh Crescent safety surface repairs budget of £6,250 and the additional groundwork budget of £7,000 be utilised in another play area project.
- 5) that the Facilities Manager progresses the production of a professional plan and proposal for the use of the Park Road play area for a community area and seeks to consult as appropriate.

- 6) that the proposal of the youth workers for the use of the community café at the Leys be agreed.
- 7) that the wall repairs at St Mary's Churchyard are commissioned without delay and the wall remains the maintenance responsibility of the Town Council.
- 8) that the Facilities Manager considers further options regarding the provision of a handrail at Tower Hill cemetery.
- 9) that the Facilities Manager places the order for the item of equipment at the Leys and that the Council's financial regulation, as detailed above, be waived in order to proceed as a matter of urgency.

(1 member of the public left the meeting at this point, being 7.25pm)

A295 **LARGE EVENT REPORT**

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

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted

A296 **REQUEST TO PURCHASE LAND ADJACENT TO 185 THORNEY LEYS, WITNEY**

The Committee received and considered the correspondence and valuation, as circulated with the agenda. The Town Clerk advised that it was Council policy to look at individual requests on their own merits and in the past some pockets of land had been sold.

A Member cautioned that such parcels of land had an amenity value and if sold the Committee needed to be aware they were giving people the opportunity to virtually double the size of their property, with the possibility of development on that land, which would consequently set a precedent. The Town Clerk confirmed that she would need to seek advice on whether there could be a covenant any potential sale that the land remains undeveloped.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the correspondence be noted.
- 2) that the Members of the Committee visit the site prior to their next scheduled meeting, and any decision be deferred to the next meeting of this committee.
- 3) that advice be sought to ensure that the value in the valuation report is realistic.

(the remaining 2 members of the public left the meeting at this point, being 7.30pm)

A297 **REQUEST FOR BUS SHELTER AT BURWELL SHOPS**

The Committee received and considered the correspondence, as circulated with the agenda.

The Facilities Manager confirmed that the bus shelter at Burwell shops had been removed about one year ago, due to vandalism.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the correspondence be noted and that the correspondent be advised the Council are investigating the possible options.
- 2) that the Facilities Manager investigates the options for vandal proof bus shelters, and also shelters which can be sponsored and/or include advertising, and reports back to a future meeting.

A298 **MINUTES OF IN BLOOM WORKING PARTY**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 16 April and 4 June 2014, as circulated with the agenda.

RECOMMENDED: that the minutes be noted.

A299 **MINUTES OF WORLD WAR ONE WORKING PARTY**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2014, as circulated with the agenda.

RECOMMENDED: that the minutes be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm

Chairman