

MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 8 April 2013

At 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present

Councillor H Eaglestone (Chairman)

Councillors:	Mrs J C Baker	P J Dorward
	A K Beames	D S Enright
	N Buckle	D A Snow
	Mrs B J Churchill	B J Woodruff
	R F N Curry	C K Woodward
Officers:	Town Clerk	Democratic Services Officer
	Deputy Town Clerk	Communications Officer

9 members of the public

162 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for their absence were received from Councillors Ms C Curry, A D Harvey, J S King and T J Morris.

163 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

164 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the following meetings be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman:

Ordinary meeting of 11 February 2013
Extra-ordinary meeting of 27 February 2013

165 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Cllr Andrew Coles (WODC) wished to speak on agenda item 7 – Motions to Council. Cllr Coles declared that he was also a member of the West Witney Sports & Social Club Committee and encouraged Members to support the motion proposed by Councillor Woodruff. He was aware that this issue had been debated over a number of years, and he himself had raised it at the last two town meetings.

He commented that he was not going over the old argument, however, in his view, it was now clear that the majority of sports users and residents wished the sports facility to remain where it was. He remarked that the Members were elected to support the residents and to work together for the best interest of the town. He considered that this issue was too important for “points scoring”; it was about the future and the legacy from the Olympics to encourage and support young people into sports.

He was aware that there was a lot of work and investment required, however, this could start here in the Council Chamber tonight.

(Councillor D S Enright entered the meeting at this point, being 7.03pm)

166 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

The Town Clerk reported that, unfortunately, there was no update as the police officers were not available to attend the meeting.

Councillor B J Churchill gave an update as Chairman of Witney NAG. She commented that graffiti was on the increase and requested that the Town Council look to erecting graffiti walls.

The Town Clerk confirmed that these had been in the plans a few years ago and could possibly be included at the new BMX track at Curbridge.

RESOLVED: that the suggestion for the erection of graffiti walls be referred to the Leisure & Recreation Committee.

167 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Members received and considered the details of the events attended by the Town Mayor, as circulated at the meeting

RESOLVED: that the report be noted

168 **MOTIONS TO COUNCIL**

Councillor B J Woodruff proposed that:

The Town Council immediately withdraw the policy to sell West Witney Sports Ground and will proactively explore the various options available to improve the current site.

The motion was seconded by Councillor A K Beames.

Cllr D S Enright commented that the motion returned the Council to a neutral position, retaining ownership and looking to improve facilities across the town, an opportunity to think it through again. He did not see this as a backwards step, rather an opportunity to discuss how this might be progressed, including looking at investment to improve the facilities.

Cllr N Buckle agreed that the motion had merit; however, he was concerned with regard to the funding of the current site for improvements, would grants be available? He was aware that many elements are dilapidated, including the grounds, and could only agree if the improvements could be moved forward without costing the tax payers a lot of money. He queried where the funds would come from without broadening the scope, as a new site could do.

Cllr R F N Curry remarked that he would be willing to support the motion on two conditions. Firstly that all the facilities in the town are reviewed at the same time and, secondly, that there is a proper business plan and that the costs are shared between users and tax payers, even if this meant increased charges to the users.

The Town Clerk commented that this would be covered later on the agenda.

Members commented that this proposal was still moving the issue forward and that if things did not work out the sports grounds might have to be sold and they also agreed that it was important to look at all areas, backing up with a feasibility study.

A vote was taken on the motion and it was carried by 9 votes in favour and 2 abstentions.

(1 member of the public left at this point).

169 **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

- a) Planning & Development Committee of 26 February, 19 March and 2 April 2013

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Planning Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved.

- b) Leisure & Recreation Committee of 4 March 2013

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Planning Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved.

- c) Public Halls Committee of 27 February and 11 March 2013

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Public Halls Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved.

- d) Finance & General Purposes Committee of 18 March 2013 and verbal report of Special meeting held earlier in the evening.

The Town Clerk gave a verbal report on the Special Finance & General Purposes held earlier in the evening.

It had been agreed to purchase a new dumper and some changes had been made to the charging rates for Langdale Hall.

Confidential items would be reported at the end of the meeting

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee as detailed be received and any recommendations approved.

170 **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

Members received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2013.

A Member thanked the public who had attended the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the minutes of the above meeting be agreed.
- 2) that any items raised at the meeting which required consideration be referred to the appropriate committee of the Council or other responsible authority for discussion and possible action.

171 **TO AGREE A MAYOR ELECT**

It was proposed that Councillor P J Dorward be Mayor Elect to take over the role at the Annual Meeting on 8 May 2013. This was seconded and unanimously agreed.

Councillor H B Eaglestone congratulated Councillor P J Dorward on his appointment.

RESOLVED: that Councillor P J Dorward be appointed as Mayor Elect.

172 **ST MARY'S CHURCHYARD, COGGES**

Members received and considered the correspondence, as circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk advised that the request was for the Council's agreement for the churchyard to be closed and that at this time St Mary's Church Cogges intended to retain the responsibility for the maintenance. She confirmed that these responsibilities could be transferred at a later date.

A Member suggested that the Church might like to become more involved in Windrush Cemetery as this will now become more important to them.

A Member queried why the gates were now locked at Tower Hill Cemetery. The Town Clerk confirmed that the Officers were only enforcing existing policy, that the vehicles access is available for those with disabilities. She highlighted the problems that had occurred due to vehicles in the cemetery.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the correspondence be noted.
- 2) that agreement is given for the closure of the Churchyard at St Mary's Church, Cogges
- 3) that St Mary's Church Cogges, be invited to discuss ways in which they can become involved in the Windrush Cemetery.
- 4) that the issues regarding vehicular access in Tower Hill Cemetery be referred to the Leisure & Recreation Committee.

173

WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk, as circulated.

Members discussed the contents of the report in the light of the support of the motion earlier on the agenda (168). A Member reiterated the comment that all facilities across the town should be included, and this was endorsed. Another Member suggested that the setting up of a new site should be included for information.

A Member suggested that Members should visit other towns to see what they have and how they have accomplished it. It was also suggested that the study should be broadened to West Oxfordshire to share the financial costs.

A Member commented that contact was important with the groups as they have a vast knowledge. Secondly, looking at the development as a "hub & spokes" this would centre on West Witney with the other sites as the spokes. He remarked that there was a clear demand for more football pitches and therefore a lot of thinking and focus would be needed.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the report be noted
- 2) that the commissioning of a Feasibility Study be agreed to include all existing and potential sites in Witney.
- 3) that the report be funded from the earmarked reserves.

174

SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED: that the seal of the Council be affixed to any documents arising from decisions taken by this meeting of the Council.

175 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

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.

(The members of the public left at this point).

176 **CORN EXCHANGE**

Members received and considered the Feasibility Study compiled by Oxford Inspires, as circulated with the agenda.

A Member suggested that this be deferred in order to allow more time for Members to read and digest the information. A Member commented that time should not be allowed to slip, the Council needed to keep to the timescales. He suggested that Members read and sought clarification on questions and queries. Members were not being asked to rewrite or modify the study and if the Council was smart they could get the work started in September.

Members discussed the way forward to enable the project to be progressed in a timely manner. It was noted that there was a meeting of the Advisory Committee scheduled for 18 April and they would be able to provide advice to the Council.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the Feasibility Study be noted.
- 2) that a Special meeting of the Public Halls Committee, followed by Extra-Ordinary Council be arranged for a date after 18 April and before the Annual Council meeting on 8 May 2013.

177 **CONFIDENTIAL REPORT FROM SPECIAL FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE – 8 APRIL 2013**

The Town Clerk gave a verbal report from the above meeting with regard to the confidential items.

She reported that It had been agreed any third party should not be permitted use of the flat in Langdale Hall. She also reported the resignation of the Democratic Services Officer, and that it had been agreed this position should now become full time. The Town Clerk had been given delegated responsibility for the recruitment of a replacement.

The meeting closed at 8pm

Chairman