

MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 5th August 2013

At 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor PJ Dorward (Chairman)

Councillors:	J C Baker	A D Harvey
	A K Beames	C Holliday
	C Curry	J S King
	R F N Curry	T J Morris
	H B Eaglestone	D A Snow
	D S Enright	B J Woodruff
		CK Woodward

Officers: Town Clerk	Facilities Manager
Deputy Town Clerk	Democratic Services Officer

Also present: There were five members of the public.

371 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for their absence were received from Councillors N Buckle, Mrs B J Churchill, and S M Way.

372 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

373 **MINUTES**

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

Ordinary meeting held on 24th June 2013
Special meeting held on 2nd July 2013

374 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24TH JUNE 2013**

A member referred to minute no. 280 – Witney Policing Issues. He said that although the police had advised that the crime rate was dropping, in his opinion vandalism was definitely increasing. The member said that the previous mayor had reported crime in a column in the Witney Gazette and the police had promised to get on top of the situation. He asked for Council officers to prepare a report on vandalism and what it had/was costing the Council. The Council should then consider sending it to the Thames Valley Police Commissioner and ask him to speak to the local police about it.

The Chairman replied that this would be a heavy workload for the staff to provide a retrospective report, but perhaps a report could be done going forward. Vandalism had been reported to the Finance and General Purposes Committee in the past but members had requested that this ceased.

Cllr C Curry left the meeting at 7.05pm

Another member thought it would be reasonable to start reporting vandalism again, whilst another member thought that vandalism should be reported to the police and not the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

RECOMMENDED: that the reintroduction of regular vandalism updates be referred to the next meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee for further investigation.

Another member had a more general matter arising from the minutes. He said that sometimes he found it difficult when reading the minutes to recall what he had said as members were not named but referred to as "a member". He asked if it would be possible for members to be named in the minutes. The Town Clerk said that it had been a Council decision not to name members in the past, but this could be reversed if all members agreed.

AGREED: members unanimously agreed to be named in the minutes.

375 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON 2ND JULY 2013**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the special meeting held on 2nd July 2013.

376 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Owen Edwards

Mr Edwards explained that he had addressed the Council a year ago and had asked members to make the Council more open for public participation and to make it easier for the public to participate if they wished to do so. He said that he felt that the new website was more user friendly and easier to navigate. However, he asked why draft minutes were not published on the website, marked as draft. He had contacted the Council to ask for the papers for the evening's meeting and the Town Clerk had explained that the minutes were only in draft form but he had been able to collect paper copies. He thought that they should be available to anyone taking an interest in the Council and suggested that if members accessed the minutes electronically, printing costs to the Council would be reduced.

Mr Edwards noted that in the draft minutes of the Leisure and Recreation Minutes the Witney Vikings would be moving to Burwell Meadow and the cricket square would be removed. He also noted the proposal for the Excel Tennis Centre at the Leys and was fully in support of both of these. Mr Edwards also noted that the Leisure and Recreation Committee draft minutes stated "it was clear to members that the Town Council needed to decide which direction to follow regarding the future of all the recreation grounds and facilities" and he said that this illustrated that the Council needed the input of local people.

Mr Edwards stated that the Rt. Hon Eric Pickles had recently addressed the Local Government Association and the National Association of Local Councils and had emphasised the importance of transparency. Mr Edwards appealed to the Council to be more transparent.

Mr Chris Pyne

Mr Pyne had addressed the Council previously as a representative of Witney Tennis Club and had attended many previous council meetings. In April 2012 he believed that the Council had agreed for the resurfacing work to the tennis courts at West Witney to be carried out, and this had been reported in the local press. However, nothing had happened since. He said that three surveys had been carried out and had all concluded that the courts needed refurbishment. On 8th April the Council had decided not to sell West Witney Sports Ground, and the tennis clubs believed that the courts would finally be refurbished. At this point the Council had commissioned another report from SSGB. Mr Pyne felt that delays were continually introduced and he had diminishing confidence in the Council.

Mr Pine was unhappy that the SSGB report had been presented to the Council in a closed meeting, and he did not understand why meetings needed to be held in confidential session. The Town Clerk advised that the SSGB report presented to the Council had been a draft and the final version would be available in September. Mr Pyne said that this would mean that the courts would not be renovated

for another year. He stated that West Witney User Group was in favour of resurfacing the court and he could not see why this should not be done immediately.

Cllr Woodward apologised for the fact that the tennis courts had not been attended to, but he emphasised that the SSGB report was in draft form and not final.

Mr Pyne asked what the timeline was for the resurfacing of the tennis courts. The Town Clerk said that SSGB would be consulting with the clubs again and would report back with recommendations to the Council before any decisions were made.

Cllr R Curry commented that SSGB were looking at all facilities in the Town and not just West Witney Sports Ground. It was taking a great deal of time and money and it was important to take the time to reach the right conclusions.

The Chair said that the Council would involve as many people as possible in the process and would avoid going into closed session as far as possible. Closed meetings would only happen when sums of money and named contractors were involved.

377 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had attended various events in his role as Mayor and had been particularly impressed by The Batt School's production of "Oliver".

Cllr Enright advised members that he had attended the Community Lunch for In Bloom, along with other councillors. He said it had been an excellent event and had enjoyed wonderful food including home grown potato salad.

378 **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

a) Planning and Development Committee of 2nd July and 23rd July 2013

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meetings of the Planning Committee.

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

b) Leisure and Recreation Committee of 8th July and Special Leisure and Recreation Committee of 29th July 2013

8th July: L308 - Cllr Morris stated that he was disappointed that there had been no further action regarding the tennis courts at West Witney Sports Ground.

29th July: L352 – Cllr Beames reminded members that the West Witney Sports and Social Club wanted to make a presentation to the Council. The Town Clerk said this would be possible at the next meeting.

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

c) Special Public Halls Committee of 2nd July, Ordinary Public Halls Meeting of 15th July and Special Public Halls Meeting of 5th August 2013

15th July: H 324 – Cllr King asked if there was an update on the situation with the Madley Park Hall trustees and the lease. Cllr Morris said that he was at fault for not progressing the situation and would organise a meeting within the next week. He would then e-mail or write to Cllr King to update him.

5th August: Members received a verbal report from Cllr Morris on the meeting held earlier that evening. He reported that the Committee had considered the appointment of an organisation to assist in grant applications for the Corn Exchange Project and had recommended that this was carried out.

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

d) Finance and General Purposes Committee of 22nd July and Special Finance and General Purposes Meeting of 5th August 2013

22nd July: F336 – The Chairman asked when the three year forecast would be available. The Deputy Town Clerk replied that she would present it at the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee in September.

5th August: The Chairman gave a verbal update on the meeting held earlier that evening. It had concerned staff related matters and salaries and as it had been held in closed session he could not report anything further.

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

379 **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS DISPLAY**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager. She explained that the cost of repairing the existing lights was prohibitive and she had asked the supplier to add in as many lease items as possible.

Cllr Harvey congratulated the Facilities Manager on her work and the cost savings this scheme would achieve. The Chairman echoed Cllr Harvey's comments and asked if there was a plan of the displays. The Facilities Manager said that she hoped to have one available soon.

Cllr Enright thought that the ideas were fantastic and he was particularly keen on the image light projections. He recalled that last year a freak gust of wind had taken out the lights on the large Christmas tree near Church Green and he asked if there were any thoughts about re-siting it. The Facilities Manager said that she was looking to get a fuller tree in this position and it would be better supported.

Cllr R Curry queried the costs of the scheme and the Facilities Manager explained that the Council was in the third year of a three year tender contract. The cost of this year would be £18,206, which was a reduction of £700.00 on last year. Cllr R Curry asked if this was from the capital budget. The Town Clerk explained that as the Council was switching to a lease scheme for the new lights, it would come from a the revenue budget.

Cllr Morris thought that the Christmas Light and the associated events were positive and it was good to see local people out in the square despite the associated problems.

AGREED: that the scheme as suggested was agreed and the lighting order placed.

Cllr Baker recalled that the Facilities Manager had been concerned about finding a larger Christmas tree; Hilltop Garden Centre usually helped with the tree but they were unable to provide anything larger than last year. The Council was looking for help in sourcing a larger tree – any donations would be welcome!

380 **HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDIT**

a) PPE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Manger on PPE for the staff responsible for grave digging. In response to a question from Cllr Beames, she confirmed that the majority of the time the staff would use the reusable suits but this was weather dependent and the total cost was hard to quantify as it depended on both the weather and the number of burials. The money would come from the existing cemetery budget and the Facilities Manager said that she may exceed the budget by £500. Cllr R Curry asked what happened when there was an overspend on the budget and the Town Clerk explained that the Council would have to agree this.

AGREED: the report was noted and the costs for the provision of the required PPE was agreed, including up to a £500 overspend on the budget.

b) Updated Health and Safety Project Plan

The Facilities Manager had produced an updated plan and an additional spread sheet to help members see what had happened in the last six weeks. Cllr Woodward asked why item 22 (Ladders – working at height – checks) was overdue. The Facilities Manager explained that this was due to staff holidays.

AGREED: to note the updated Health and Safety Project Plan.

381 **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.

The meeting closed at 7.56pm

Chairman