



Miss Jones also commented that a member of the public had asked her to raise the issue of green mesh on pathway areas, as it was felt that this was hazardous to walk on. Miss Jones appealed to the Council to make 2014 a better year for everyone and to make Witney a caring community again.

Alex Beale - addressed the Council on behalf of young people who used the skate park at The Leys. He felt that there were negative issues with the teenage shelter with people taking drugs and doing other illicit activities. It was also in a bad state of repair.

The skate ramp itself had no drainage and only lighting at one end. The concrete was also cracked. He would like to see the skate park improved.

Cllr R Curry asked if Alex Beale could make a list of things needing improvement with the Facilities Manager. The Facilities Manager said that this was already planned.

Cllr Dorward thanked Mr Beale for coming to address the Committee and said that it took “some guts” for a young man to do so.

Chris Pyne - reminded members that the tennis courts at West Witney were to be used for competitions on 13 April and 22 June 2014. He had previously reported members of the tennis club slipping over on court and he himself had taken a tumble on Saturday which had been a dry day. He stated that the club was Club Mark accredited and therefore he had to attend training, including on safety.

Mr Pyne said that he had had to attend 13 Council meetings in order to get something done about the state of the courts. He had been shocked that the Town Council had not sat down with him between meetings to try to resolve the situation. He felt that communication had been difficult between himself, the councillors and the Town Clerk. He was not sure that e-mails sent via the Town Clerk reached councillors. He suggested that councillors could use Witney Town Council domain e-mails to facilitate communication.

Mr Pyne thanked Cllrs Beames and Woodruff for their hard work. He took objection to the fact that at a previous meeting on 2 December, Cllrs Eaglestone and R Curry had accused the tennis club of blackmailing the Town Council. It had been requested that the Tennis Club pay the rent up to date. Mr Pyne said he would present a cheque for the rent at the end of the meeting and would report back on the situation to the Rt. Hon. David Cameron MP.

Cllr Churchill pointed out to Mr Pyne that all councillors contact details were available in the Year Book. The Democratic Service Officer would send one to Mr Pyne.

L006 **OPERATIONAL REPORT**

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

The Facilities Manger was pleased to report that additional funding from the Chill Out Fund had enabled further work to the Burwell play area. She had not received any further communication from the public regarding the Park Road play area.

Cllr Holliday updated the committee on the Leys and the Splash Park. He explained that the lady heading the “Liven Up the Leys” Committee had resigned due to personal reasons so

things had ground to a halt, but the remaining members were trying to get the project back on track. There was potentially quite a lot of funding to come in.

The Facilities Manager advised that she had carried out a consultation at the skate park the previous Thursday evening in conjunction with Base 33. Despite it being a very cold night, there were 30 young people there. As mentioned by Alex Beale, the young people and the PCSOs wanted the teenage shelter removed. Cllr Baker felt that Alex had made a good point, but asked what the shelter would be like if it was in a better state of repair.

The Facilities Manager said that in essence there were 2 sets of young people using the area – those there to skate and those there wishing to carry out anti-social behaviour. The skaters were often intimidated by the other set of young people.

Cllr R Curry was happy to propose the removal of the shelter. He noted that the police hadn't actually done anything. The Facilities Manager said there had been a police drive by whilst she was at the park, but they would not have been able to see into the shelter from the road. Cllr R Curry asked that this issue be added into the report to be sent to Thames Valley Police.

Cllr Dorward wondered if just the side panels of the shelter could be removed. He felt if it was removed altogether the problem would move to the concrete areas instead.

Cllr King asked exactly what state the shelter was in. The Facilities Manager said that in terms of health and safety it was not too bad, but it was a visual eyesore. In reply to his further question she confirmed removing side panels would not make it unstable.

*Cllr Enright entered at 6.22pm*

Cllr Churchill said that she would raise this at the next NAG meeting. She queried how long it would take to redevelop the skate park area. The Facilities Manager said that she had met with Base 33 and the skaters wanted to raise money to replace the teenage shelter with something else. Cllr Churchill thought this was a good idea – if the skaters raised the money for it, they would ensure it was not vandalised.

Cllr Dorward reported that in the mornings he saw year 6 and 7 pupils using the skate park instead of going to school. In the evening it was an older set of kids who were smoking. He also noted that there appeared to be drug taking at the rear entrance to Henry Box School. The Facilities Manager pointed out that there was another teenage shelter on The Leys away from the skate park.

Cllr Baker asked if there was lighting in the area or if it had been damaged. The Facilities Manager replied that currently there was no lighting there, although she was planning to bring a report to the next committee meeting on this. Cllr R Curry thought that even if the sides of the shelter were removed it would not stop the behaviour occurring. He proposed its removal. All members agreed.

The Facilities Manager reported that the memorial stability project had started that morning and the first reports would be coming back in March. Cllr King asked who would pay for the memorial repairs if needed. The Facilities Manager recalled that the Committee had previously decided to allow officers to run with the project until the end of the fiscal year. Every effort would be made to trace grave owners and it was possible that notices would be placed in the Witney Gazette.

Cllr Dorward commented that there would be a two month gap between the end of the trial of the new entry system at Tower Hill and this committee making a decision on how to proceed. The Facilities Manager had been collating responses from the trial period and currently the majority of people wanted a return to the appointment system. Cllr King asked when the three month trial period was up and it was confirmed that it was 21 January. The results would be brought to the meeting of 3 March. Cllr Dorward said that the committee should make an informed decision and that they should consider extending the trial until the 3 March meeting. Cllr King thought this would be a good idea.

The Facilities Manager commented that she would also be including health and safety information in her report and she need time to do this. Furthermore, people who had responded were expecting the results to be considered at the meeting on 3 March. Cllr King asked if any further damage had occurred. The Facilities Manager said that everything in the new system was working well and that there had not been further damage – the only elements under question were the bollards.

Cllr Dorward stated that St. Mary's was a closed churchyard, to which the Facilities Manager replied that it was closed, but no evidence to support the closure order was available to the Town Council. He asked where that left the Town Council in terms of liability. The Facilities Manager replied that the Town Council would certainly be responsible for memorial stability as previously reported, but details on maintenance responsibilities would be included in her report for 3 March.

Cllr Beames asked who was responsible for Holy Trinity Church and the Facilities Manager replied that it was the Town Council, as reported at the last meeting. There was now a cost centre set up for the memorials in this churchyard. Cllr Dorward commented that although some memorial work would be coming to the Town Council, it would not be incumbent to do all of it at once. This could be a discussion point at budget setting time.

Cllr R Curry noted that it was only the Church of England churchyards that the Town Council would have responsibility for and there were no more than the three already known. He felt that there was little point in spending too much money trying to avoid responsibility. Cllr Churchill was concerned that English Heritage would prescribe certain standards for memorial restoration. However, the Facilities Manager explained that she had already contacted the organisation and they had advised that this was not under their jurisdiction. The officers would work with conservation officers and apply for a faculty in due course.

Members returned to the subject of extending the trial of the new entry system at Tower Hill at the direction of the Chair. Members voted, with all members voting to extend with the exception of the Chair, who abstained.

The Facilities Manager drew members' attention to the new rules and regulations for the cemeteries. Cllr Baker noted that the times of Tower Hill were the existing ones and the Facilities Manager said they would be updated in March should anything change.

Cllr Churchill asked what the situation was regarding the collapsed wall at Tower Hill Cemetery as it looked as though it had been tidied up but nothing else had happened. The Facilities Manager said that some work had been done but what was needed was a ten year rolling fund to repair it and that a further report of the severity of the wall would be available 3 March.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the teenage shelter in the skate park area at the Leys Recreation Ground be removed;
2. that the trial of the new entry system at Tower Hill cemetery be extended until 3 March.

L007 **SPORTS FACILITIES WORKING PARTY**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Sports Facilities Working Party held on 6 January 2013.

Cllr Dorward (Chair of the Working Party) went through the recommendations arising from the meeting. He said that it had been decided not to include West Witney Sports Ground in recommendation one as the Sports Association was newly formed and could not offer advice on funding solutions. It had been decided to prioritise Burwell, The Leys and then King George V Field. The Facilities Manager commented that the fee proposal for feasibility studies on Burwell and The Leys were now in as requested and these had been circulated at the meeting.

Cllr Dorward commented that under recommendation two the wording should read that the town “should be given choice” and not “would be given choice”. He explained that the Working Party had had concern that there was no “Plan B” if funding options failed and the discussion had turned to the possibility of selling land. This would need to go to public consultation. Cllr Dorward said that the local people he had spoken to were against any land sale.

He explained that recommendation 5, relating to the tennis courts at West Witney, if the Tennis Club wanted a higher specification than the Town Council’s recommendations then they would have to contribute money to pay for the additional work. Cllr Dorward thanked Mr Pyne for the backdated rent. The Facilities Manager commented that she had obtained quotes and discussed specifications with Mr Pyne, and her recommendations would be brought to the Committee at the meeting of 3 February.

Cllr Dorward commented that he knew the Tennis Club had, in the past, had their rent reduced. If the work was done to the tennis courts, the Town Council should consider increasing the rent. This would be part of a review comparing costs against other local facilities.

The Facilities Manager asked if the Committee wanted to make any decision on the feasibility fee proposals for Burwell and The Leys. Cllr Beames queried why there was no proposal for King George V Field. The Facilities Manager explained that this was the lowest priority area and there was not enough money for this to be included currently.

Cllr R Curry asked if there was any money in the budget for the fee proposals that were now in. The Facilities manager said that there was £196,000 from the earmarked budget for West Witney. Cllr R Curry commented that if this was spent now it could not be spent later. Cllr Baker asked what the Council would get if the proposals were accepted. It was explained that the feasibility studies would show what could be done and what funding streams might be available.

Cllr R Curry asked if the Facilities Manager did not have the expertise to carry out this work herself, and she replied that she did not have the relevant knowledge of the grant funding opportunities. Cllr Churchill said that the work was necessary if the Council wanted to make funding applications,

The Facilities Manager suggested that if members felt they had not had enough time to digest the proposals, they could be referred back to the Working Party.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the Feasibility fee proposals for Burwell and The Leys be referred back to the Sports Facilities Working Party for consideration.

L008 **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2014/15 MUNICIPAL YEAR – FREQUENCY OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The Committee received the report of the Democratic Services Officer in respect of the timing and frequency of meetings for the Committee, as circulated with the agenda. She explained that there had been some consideration to dividing the current committee's responsibilities into two committees – one for amenities and one for recreation.

Cllr R Curry felt that these were two quite separate areas and had separate financial responsibilities. Having two separate committees would help focus on the issues involved. Cllr Baker agreed with Cllr R Curry and felt that this would be beneficial. She also felt currently it was hard to chair such huge agendas.

Cllr Enright thought that it would be good to narrow the focus via separate committees and wondered if the Sports Working Party could be incorporated into one of the two committees.

The Chair said that this was a big decision and wanted to hear all members' views. In summary the majority were in favour of splitting the Committee into two, however Cllr Enright cautioned that careful thought should be given to frequency of meetings. Cllr Churchill wanted to know how the membership of the proposed committees would work and did not agree with two separate committees as information sometime dovetailed.

The Facilities Manager commented that the agendas for meetings were now full until May in any case. The Chair said that Council would make the final decision. Cllr R Curry proposed that the Leisure and Recreation Committee into two separate committees: Amenities and Recreation. Members unanimously agreed.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the Leisure and Recreation Committee be split into two separate committees: Amenities and Recreation.

L009 **REQUEST FOR PURCHASE OF LAND AT MANOR ROAD, COGGES**

The Committee had been circulated with a request from a resident to purchase a piece of land belonging to the Town Council at the rear of their property. Cllr Beames was minded to agree to this, although it would leave the Town Council with a funny strip of land that could not be accessed. He therefore proposed allowing the residents to have the land with conditions: that access for drainage etc. was permitted and if the land was built on, a commuted sum should be paid to the Town Council.

Cllr Churchill did not agree with allowing the residents to purchase the land as it would set a precedent. Cllr King agreed with Cllr Churchill; he felt that there was so much open space on the town's estates that it could set a dangerous precedent. There were a lot of people who would like to extend their gardens. He proposed that the land was retained by the Town Council. Cllr Churchill felt strongly that amenity land should not be sold off.

Cllr Enright was concerned at the presence of a historic hedge and how this would be maintained. He asked if the Facilities Manager had looked at the land. She replied that she had and that the residents were using the land to grow fruit and vegetables already.

Cllr Dorward wondered if the decision should be delayed until more members had had a look at the site in person. He also wondered if the Council should consider renting the land.

*Cllr Holliday left the meeting at 7.15pm.*

Cllr Baker commented that she thought there was a law that if someone used land for a certain number of years they had a right of ownership. The Facilities Manager said this was for a 12 year period. She added that there were two trees on the land which would still be the Council's responsibility.

The Chair proposed a vote on the issue. **1 member voted to sell the land, 6 members voted not to sell the land.**

**RECOMMENDED:** that the Town Council does not sell the land at the rear of 35 Manor Road, Cogges, to the resident of that house.

L010 **LITTLE GREEN – WOODGREEN**

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk along with correspondence from a resident, as circulated with the agenda.

Cllr R Curry stated that this had been a saga that had been on-going for the last ten years. Houses had been built on two sides of Little Green and in order to access their houses, people had started to drive on the green itself. Posts had been put in to try to stop this happening. Hailey Parish Council owned the tracks that led to the houses, whilst Witney Town Council leased the green for a peppercorn rent from Hailey Parish Council.

The Chair drew the committee's attention back to the matter in question – namely if the Town Council should approach Hailey Parish Council about transferring the ownership of the land and to the resident's concern about the state of the private road.

Cllr R Curry wanted more information on the issue. He was concerned that if residents may want the tracks to be tarmacked.

**RECOMMENDED:** to request further information from the Town Clerk and to defer the decision until the next available agenda slot.

L011 **FINANCE REPORT**

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

Cllr Dorward queried what the meaning of “funds available” meant in months 8 and 9 and Cllr Beames asked what had been spent in relation to item 203 – irrecoverable VAT.

The Committee also noted that a request had been made by the Carnival Committee to increase the grant it received from the Town Council from £500 to £1,000 for 2014. The Rotary Club was also asking for a donation to cover the loss made when it provided a burger stand at the Christmas Lights Lantern Parade. The Facilities Manager pointed out that the Rotary Club had not been asked to bring the burger van to the event.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted.
2. that the requests from the Carnival Committee and the Rotary Club of Witney be referred to Finance and General Purposes Committee.

L012 **HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT**

The Facilities manager had nothing to report.

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The meeting closed at 7.38pm.

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Chair