

AMENITIES MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 7 December 2015

At 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor: Mrs B J Churchill (Chairman)

Councillors: Dr S E Bartington C Brown
H B Eaglestone C Holliday

Non Committee Member: A K Beames

Officers: Town Clerk Works Contracts Supervisor
Responsible Financial Officer Democratic Services Officer

Also present: 1 member of the public

A608 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for his absence was received from Cllr J S King.

A609 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Churchill and Brown declared interests in agenda item 7a as they were the Town Council's elected representatives on the West Witney Sports and Social Club. Cllr Churchill also declared an interest in item 7b. – verbal report from the Public Halls Committee held earlier that evening – as she was a trustee of the Witney Corn Exchange Trust.

A610 MINUTES

RESOLVED to adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Amenities Committee held on 2 November 2015.

A611 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 NOVEMBER 2015

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2015 to be discussed at the meeting.

A612 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The member of the public present did not wish to participate in the meeting.

A613 PROGRESS ON IMPROVEMENTS AND REPAIRS SINCE LAST MEETING

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk.

A member asked for an update on the extension to the footpath across The Leys from the new development at Buttercross Works. The Town Clerk advised that WODC had confirmed the Town Council would not receive any of the New Homes Bonus money – as suggested it would

by the developer. The developer considered that the Town Council should ask for the money from the New Homes Bonus Money. The member was concerned as the developer would soon be finished on site and the path situation was unresolved. There was some urgency to the situation as the path might be lost altogether.

Another member recalled that the developer had verbally agreed that it would put the path in as the Council had allowed access via a gate onto its land. This had not been from S106 or New Homes Bonus Money. The Town Clerk explained that she had already written and expressed the Council's disappointment to the developer. She suggested writing to the head of Planning at WODC and explaining that the Council had allowed access onto its land and had expected a path in return, but now the developer has said that it should be funded from the New Homes Bonus money. There was little point in writing to the developer again it had made its position clear.

Another member commented that the potholes on the cycleway at The Leys were very bad. The Town Clerk said that the situation was complicated as the Town Council owned the land but the County Council owned the tarmac.

A member asked what had happened to the lease of the pavilion. The Town Clerk replied that she had received the amended draft lease and would pass it onto the solicitor.

Members had been asked to consider the option of installing more wildlife rafts at the Lake to replace those that had sunk. Members felt that given its budget constraints it was not a priority at this time.

The Town Clerk drew members' attention to the condition of football pitches at West Witney Sports Ground as due to recent rainfall pitches 2 and 3 were almost unplayable and the pitch at The Leys was in a similar condition. The Works Contracts Supervisor explained that unfortunately pitch drainage could not be done until the land was drier and harder. The contractor had also recommended that the pitches should be verti drained. The cost would be just under £1,500. Money was available in the contingency fund. Members considered this and felt the work should be carried out.

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) that the report be noted;
- 2) that the Town Clerk write to the Head of Planning at WODC concerning the extension of the footpath at The Leys Recreation Ground;
- 3) that the pitch drainage at West Witney Sports Ground and The Leys Recreation Ground be carried out;
- 4) that wildlife rafts be not installed at the Lake.

A614 **PLAY AREAS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. Members also received a list of play areas and equipment installed. A member noted that the District Council were trying to move forward with the transfer of Raleigh Crescent play area to the Town Council and that a 25 year lease had been offered in 2014 over the freehold. He asked what benefit

that would have to the Town Council. The Town Clerk replied that the lease had run out but the District Council would not give the land to the Town Council on a freehold basis. There was the option not to take on the play area at all. Members decided that this option would be the most sensible.

Another member said that he wanted to see Park Road as a proper play area again. Others agreed that it was in a sorry state and wondered if there could be community involvement in regenerating this. Members agreed that this should become a play area once again.

The District Council was also keen to transfer Unterhaching Park to the Town Council. The Chairman commented that this was a well-used park. The Town Clerk reminded members that the Council was going to take it on but the District Council had included a copse of trees, the dry stone wall and street lighting, all of which would have ongoing financial implications. WODC had offered to increase the commuted sum but this would not defray the costs in the long term.

Members then considered the other play areas. The Works Contracts Supervisor thought that Eton Close was a very secure play area. A member said that she had looked at this with Nicole O'Donnell of OPFA and she did not see why this could not be included in the Oxlease play area project. Members thought this was an excellent idea.

Another member commented that the play equipment that had been decommissioned from The Leys could be put into Moorland Road, Eton Close and Park Road. The Works Contracts Supervisor cautioned the Committee that safety surfaces, namely the wet pour, was a big issue and most of it needed replacing. The Council's current policy was to replace with bark or grass.

It was agreed that initial priorities should be Park Road and Moorland Road. Community fundraising would be welcomed and the Town Clerk would try to contact a member of the save Park Road Play area group. Cllrs Beames and Brown volunteered to help the project.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the report be noted;
- 2) that the original intention to take the freehold of Unterhaching Play Area excluding the copse, dry stone wall and street lighting be reaffirmed;
- 3) that the District Council be informed that the Town Council does not wish to take on Raleigh Crescent on a 25 year lease;
- 4) that Park Road and Moorland Road play areas be prioritised for 2016/17 and Eton Close play area should be taken into the Oxlease project for 2017/18.

A616 **MINUTES OF SUB COMMITTEES**

- a) *West Witney Spots Ground Sub Committee Minutes 2nd December 2015*

The Committee received and considered the minutes from the meeting of the West Witney Sports Ground Sub Committee held on 2 December 2015.

Members expressed concern over the state of the clubhouse and a discussion followed on the best way to move forward. Members felt that it should be viewed as a long term project and there was potential for a superb facility for the community. Members felt that the Council needed to be proactive in communicating with the Sports and Social Club.

RECOMMENDED: that the minutes be noted.

b) *Public Halls Sub-Committee 7 December 2015 – Verbal report*

The Committee received and considered a verbal report from the Town Clerk on the meeting held earlier that evening. She explained that the meeting had discussed the compliance in the Corn Exchange which was now well in hand; the introduction of a £500 deposit for high risk events; the budget for public halls and revised hire fees and charges. The Committee had agreed to cover the legal costs for the lease on behalf of the Trust which would be taken from the start up grant and the Trust would be asked to set up a bank account. Storage issues were on going.

A member asked how close the Council was to handing over the building to the Trust. The Town Clerk replied that the target date was 1 April 2016.

RECOMMENDED: that the verbal report of the meeting held earlier in the evening be noted.

A617 **REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL/SPECIAL PROJECTS PROGRAMME: REVISED BUDGET 2015/16 AND ESTIMATES FOR 2016/17**

1. *Revised Revenue Budget for 2015/16 and Base Revenue Budget for 2016/17*

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO. She explained that she had applied what had been recommended at the last Policy and Resources and Full Council meetings and had also prepared a “worst case scenario” forecast.

2. *Revenue Budget Growth Items 2016/17 and capital/special revenue projects programme 2016/17 and beyond*

A member stated that the Council should put money aside for the repair of memorials. The Town Clerk reminded members that the Council did not actually have a faculty to repair memorials – the interlocutory faculty was for a risk assessment and fencing off any immediately dangerous memorials. The member added that she was also concerned about tree roots coming up under the wall at St. Mary’s Churchyard. Members wanted the churchyard maintenance to be considered at the Budget Working Party.

A member stated that the budget should include money for changing rooms at West Witney Sports Ground.

A member asked if the Council received a commercial rent from the Cemetery Lodge at Tower Hill. The Town Clerk said that this was not the case, but the current tenants had protected rights. The RFO commented that an earmarked reserve for chapel maintenance would be needed.

A member asked if there was any progress on sharing the works depot facilities with WODC. The RFO reported that she did not think this was a good idea – it was a risk for insurance issues. For example, it would be difficult to secure tools and ensure they were not used by District Council employees. The Town Clerk added that whilst it was a nice idea to move to a purpose built depot with the District Council, it would cost. The Works Contracts Supervisor stated that the current depot was a good central location and relatively near to the Town Hall. A discussion followed on the possibility of new accommodation for all Council staff, but the Town Clerk reminded members that until the Town Council knew which services might be devolved, there was no point in giving this further consideration.

3. Schedule of Proposed Fees and Charges for 2016/17

Members considered the proposed fees and charges for the Public Halls, Cemeteries services and recreation areas for the forthcoming financial year. Members agreed the 1.5% increase across all services, with the figures rounded up to the nearest £5.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the increase in recreation and cemetery fees as detailed in the RFO's report be agreed.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.

Chairman