

**AMENITIES MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Held on Monday 23 May 2016**

**At 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall**

**Present:**

Councillor: Dr S E Bartington (Chairman)

Councillors: P J Dorward T J Morris  
H B Eaglestone L M Price  
C Holliday D Temple

Non-Committee Members C Brown C K Woodward (Sub for J S King)

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

Also present: 1 member of the public

**A223 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

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

**A224 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chairman declared an interest in agenda item 14 as she was a Committee member of the Cogges Meadow Park Group.

**A225 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED:** that Cllr D Temple be elected Vice Chairman for the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

**A226 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** to adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Amenities Committee held on 29 February 2016.

**A227 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 29 FEBRUARY 2016**

A member queried minute A097, asking why Council staff were doing work at Rowan Cottage as he thought an outside contractor had been employed. It was explained that staff had only erected a fence to finish the work off.

**A228 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The member of public present did not wish to address the Committee.

A229 **COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR**

The Chairman invited a discussion on the Committee's priorities for the forthcoming year, whilst taking into consideration financial and resource constraints.

A member stated that last year the Council had taken a "back to basics" approach. Officers had prepared a list for consideration and he felt an updated list would be helpful this year. It was important that things were done correctly the first time.

A member proposed that money should be set aside for the path along the top of The Leys and also for an extension to the path. The Facilities Manager commented that the last quote for the extension work was £11, 000 but the existing path was in need of repair too.

A member wanted to see the skate park working party resurrected. The Town Clerk explained that the BMX/Skate Park working party had been focused on the proposed BMX track on the North Curbridge development. The member said that she would still be keen to see improvements to the existing skate park.

Another member commented that the Committee was a busy one with lots of Working Parties attached to it. For him, the priority would be to see the Corn Exchange "put to bed", followed by a resolution to the West Witney Sports ground situation. He would also like to see the skate park as a priority and the play areas would also need regeneration.

The RFO referred to the path at The Leys and reminded members that there was no money in the budget for this. She asked if the Committee wanted to add this to the budget for the next financial year. A member asked if there would be any S106 money that could be used and the Town Clerk explained that although the Town Council had made a request, the District Council had not been able to secure any from the Buttercross Works development. The developer had told her that New Homes Bonus Money had been paid to WODC and any money for the path would come out of this. However, WODC had used this funding for other purposes such as making up the shortfall on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and being able to continue to offer grant funding, and therefore the Town Council had no funds available to do any work.

A member asked if a matrix of works prioritised by a traffic light system could be produced to guide the Committee. It was clear from officers' reports that there was a lot going on. The Facilities Manager agreed to do this and she would prioritise items as a starting point. The Town Clerk added that financial information would also be important for this piece of work. The matrix would be brought back to the next meeting.

**RECOMMENDATION:** that the Facilities Manager compiles a matrix of work/projects for the forthcoming year, including financial information and prioritises them using a traffic light system to provide the Committee with a starting point for priorities/vision for the forthcoming year.

A230 **OPERATIONAL REPORT – PROGRESS ON IMPROVEMENTS AND REPAIRS SINCE LAST MEETING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Works Contracts Supervisor. He had highlighted the main works which had been carried out since the last meeting. He advised that a 2 week shut down at The Leys would be required once a year for maintenance of the play area and splash park. Autumn would be ideal after a summer of heavy usage.

Other works included block work around the skate park ramps and marking of car parking spaces at The Leys. The team was also working hard on topping up graves that had sunken.

A member asked if there was a defect period connected with the Splash Park if there were problems arising. The Works Contracts Supervisor advised that the problems were all connected with the grass getting wet and the volume of use of the area.

Another member thanked the Works team for their hard work and asked if the level of staff was sufficient. The Town Clerk said that this was a matter for the Personnel Committee and had been considered as part of the staffing review, but which was still subject to the transfer of the Corn Exchange to the Trust.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Leys play area and Splash Park should be closed once a year for two weeks in late October/early November to carry out ground and play equipment repairs.

**A231 UPDATE ON THE GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager.

A member noted that the tender evaluation would take 6 days and he felt this was above the call of duty for members to have to take this amount of time away from their normal daytime duties. He proposed that councillors should be present to open and check returned tenders but that the scoring and evaluation should be done by the Council's consultant. The Town Clerk confirmed that this approach would be in line with the process used for the Corn Exchange. All members supported this proposal.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that with regard to the forthcoming GM Contract Tender, that members be present to open and check returned tenders but the Council's consultant be employed to score and evaluate the tenders and report back.

*Cllr Holliday left the meeting at 6.35pm.*

**A232 LAKE AND COUNTRY PARK**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager.

**Lower Windrush Valley Protection Group**

A member asked if anyone other than the Lower Windrush Valley project (LWVP) had shown any interest in the Lake and Country Park and whether the Council had approached any other organisations to come up with ideas for the area. The Chairman replied that she knew Adventure Plus had shown interest and that businesses on the trading estates had expressed

interest in signage for the area. A member felt that the only negative issue with the Country Park was the lack of parking. Another member expressed support for the LWVPG but did not want this to exclude other organisations from working with the Council.

The Facilities Manager explained that the LWVPG had a pot of money for a 5 year period and the lake was of significant value ecologically. They would initially be looking at items that were vandalised last year, which would lead to a grant application by BBOWT (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust). She felt that their intention to carry out a survey would be helpful as it could identify users of the area and give direction on which other organisations might get involved.

Members asked if the survey could be a joint one between the LWVP and the Town Council.

### Grazing Rights

Further to the previous meeting and the Committee's decision that the land should be rested for a year and the grazing rights re advertised, a response had been received from the current grazier, who had been informed of the Committee's decision. She was not happy with the situation.

A member said that the decision had been taken with a heavy heart and with the benefit of hindsight maybe the grazier should have been spoken to rather than written to. However, he felt that the decision was still correct. The situation was discussed further with some members feeling that the grazier needed the Council's help. The RFO pointed out that she had not managed the land properly, or settled her invoice. The cattle had been on the land longer than agreed because the grazier had nowhere to move them to.

The Facilities Manager reminded members that a land management plan would be done. This should help with future grazing.

The Chairman added that there was no reason why the current grazier could not apply for grazing rights when they were advertised again. She thought that the land management plan should be a priority across all sites and asked that this be put into the matrix with options on how it could be achieved.

The Committee also considered a letter from a local resident who had concerns about the country park and the potential for accidents involving young people. Various options were discussed, including outreach projects and patrols by the PCSOs. The Facilities Manager suggested including the young people in the planned survey as they were users of the park. A member suggested that the park could be further opened up by the railway bridge rather than trying to restrict access. Officers explained that ownership of the bridge would need to be established first.

Members were keen to become involved in partnership working, especially with Base 33, and asked that its new CEO be invited to meet with the Council.

A member asked if the Council was protected if there was an immediate risk at the Country Park. It was explained that there were plenty of warning signs and the advice given the previous year by the Health and Safety Consultant had been followed.

The Facilities Manager was asked to write back to the resident.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted and correspondence be noted;
2. that a visitors' survey of the lake and country park is carried out by the Town Council in partnership with the LWVPG;
3. that a letter of support be sent to the LWVP as landowner to enable grant funds to be sought; the Council would be happy to support other organisations too;
4. that the letter from the grazier is noted and a land management plan is put onto place and added to the project matrix. A letter should be written to the grazier explaining that the Council's decision had been made and that a land management plan would be coming into operation;
5. that the Facilities Manager writes back to the resident with concerns about the Country Park;
6. that the CEO of Base 33 is invited to meet with the Town Council to discuss partnership working.

**A233 LEYS RECREATION GROUND, REQUEST FOR SCREENING**

The Committee received and considered a report from the Works Contracts Manager, updating members on options and costs for screening the depot following a letter from a resident. The recommendation would be to use Common Laurel rather than Beech as it did not drop so many leaves in the winter. The Works Contracts Manager recommended moving the fence forward and extending it to prevent youths congregating unseen and to disguise more of the depot. This would be slightly more expensive than just doing what the resident had requested, however, members agreed that this would be the better option.

**RECOMMENDED:** To proceed with option 2 as follows:-

To install 30m Common Laurel Hedging 60/80 £2.20 each 4 per meter at a cost of £264.00 , 30m 2.4m High V Mesh fencing Green Powder Coated including posts and fittings at a cost of £714.70 and twin mesh double leaf gate 2.4m x 3m green powder coated including Posts at a cost of £546.00. The total cost would be £1,524.70.

The resident would be informed of what was to be done.

**A234 PREMIER TENNIS**

A report by the Facilities Manager was received and considered by the Committee. Premier Tennis were running a number of summer camps. They also wished to extend an offer of free courses to families that Councillors knew were suffering from hardship in their wards.

Premier Tennis were planning to make a grant application to Awards for All in the near future and had asked for a letter of support from the Town Council.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that a letter of support is drafted from the Town Council for Premier Tennis to include in their grant application.

A235 **WITNEY MILLS CRICKET CLUB – REQUEST FOR GRANT SUPPORT**

Members received and considered the request for grant support from Witney Mills Cricket Club, as circulated with the agenda. The Town Clerk explained that the Town Council had supported the club through grant funding for over 17 years. The Town Council used to maintain the land but this had stopped and therefore an annual grant of £500 was given. The Town Clerk pointed out that funds had been budgeted for this.

**RECOMMENDED:** that grant of £500 set aside in the 2016/17 budget for Witney Mills Cricket Club be released.

A236 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the RFO.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the report be noted.

A237 **PLAY AREAS**

Oxlease

The Chairman informed the Committee that the over £1,000 had now been raised. A survey by users had been done and the next stage would be to collate the results. The results of this would be incorporated into a WREN funding application. Everything was moving forward well.

Park Road

Cllr Brown, as ward member, had taken a lead on this project and explained that questionnaires would be prepared for the users. The general consensus from speaking to people was that the play park should be reinstated.

The Works Contracts Supervisor commented that the Council had a lot of play equipment in stock that could be used to make up a play park, as presented in a report to a previous meeting. The work could be done in house but it would have to fit around other projects so would not be quick. The Town Clerk added that there was a grant of £2,500 from the Town Hall Charity that could be used.

The Facilities Manager reminded members that she had carried out a consultation via questionnaire on options for the area a few years ago and she would be happy to bring this back to the committee for review.

Members were keen to see the project started. The Works Contracts Supervisor said that the work could be prioritised if members wished but other items would have to be held back.

A member proposed that the list of equipment available was brought back to the next meeting with updated prices. Another member proposed delegating the work to the Chairman and Cllrs Brown and Beames to progress.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the verbal reports be noted;
2. that the Chairman, and Cllrs Brown and Beames progress the Park Road play area project as a priority.

A238 **MINUTES OF WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND SUB COMMITTEE – 16 MARCH 2016**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2016 has already been ratified by full Council, but out of courtesy the Town Clerk had reverted them back to the Amenities Committee and the overarching Committee with responsibility.

The Town Clerk advised that a further meeting would be arranged in the near future.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the minutes of the West Witney Sports Ground Sub-Committee from the 16 March 2016 be noted.

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The meeting closed at 7.37pm.

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Chairman