

AMENITIES MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 14 November 2016

At 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor: Dr S E Bartington (Chairman)

(Cllr Temple took the Chair until Cllr Bartington arrived at 6.15pm)

Councillors: H B Eaglestone T J Morris
P J Dorward D Temple
J S King

Non-Committee Members C Brown (substitute for C Holliday)

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

Also present: 1 member of the public

A612 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for his absence was received from Cllr C Holliday.

A613 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

A614 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Amenities Committee held on 12 September 2016.

A615 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2016**

The Town Clerk advised that there was still no news on the lease at Park Road allotments.

Cllr Morris entered the meeting at 6.05pm.

A616 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The meeting adjourned at 6.05pm in line with standing order 42 in order for Mr Tremlett to address the Committee. The meeting resumed at 6.15pm.

Cllr Bartington entered the meeting at 6.15pm and assumed the Chair from Cllr Temple.

A617 **REVISED BUDGET 2016/17 & ESTIMATES FOR 2017/18, FEES & CHARGES FOR 2017/18, CAPITAL & SPECIAL PROJECTS FOR 2017/18 & PREPARATION POOL 2018/19**

The Chairman moved this item up the agenda as the RFO was unwell.

The Committee received and considered the reports of the RFO as circulated with the agenda.

The RFO highlighted that public halls hire charges were due to increase by £5 per session and a 1.5% increase in sports hire charges. She had undertaken some cost analysis against income received with regard to sports pitches, which showed a subsidy by the Council of 62%. The cost analysed was purely the preparation of the pitches. Under cemeteries, she highlighted that on average, each burial cost the Council £918. It was acknowledged that this was a large subsidy but was dictated by the ground conditions of the graves. She pointed out that the splash park had cost £22,000 without water bills. She highlighted the situation with regard to the utility costs to the Council's tenant at the Leys Recreation Ground.

A member commented that he had some concerns about the sports subsidies and believed that a lot of clubs had a membership where 50% of people lived outside the parish. He would be very interested to see figures. Another member concurred and thanked the RFO for her reports.

A member wondered if the Council should increase the sports fees to cover the actual costs and then move the money that was currently subsidising these to a budget line for subsidised sporting activities. The Town Clerk suggested that as an alternative maybe clubs could have a lease for a peppercorn rent and all routine maintenance etc. would be done by them. This was obviously something that could be looked into in the longer term.

Members thought that data on where membership was from was important and they would like this information to be requested from the clubs.

Members considered the proposed capital projects for 2017/18 and those to be carried forward to 2018/19 and noted that there was a query over the stability of the town hall. The Town Clerk said that this was in fact referring to the Buttercross but she would check to see if the town hall needed an updated structural survey.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the revised base budget for 2016/17 and the estimates for 2017/18 as presented be approved;
3. that the capital projects for 2017/18 and projects to be carried forward to the 2018/19 budget year as presented by the RFO are priority with the following additions:-

Capital Investment

Corn Exchange Storage – no budget to be set

Corn Exchange soft furnishings - £20,000 to be budgeted for 2017/18

Revenue Projects

Tower Hill Chapel – property maintenance and setting up ear marked reserve - £2,000 to be budgeted for 2017/18

*Corn Exchange – general maintenance – property maintenance and setting up earmarked reserve - £8,000 to be budgeted for 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19.
Madley Park Hall – property maintenance and setting up of earmarked reserve - £5,000 to be budgeted for 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19.*

The RFO left the meeting at 7.12pm.

A618 OPERATIONAL REPORT AND COMMITTEE MATRIX UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Works Contracts Supervisor as circulated with the agenda. The report provided an overview on where things stood in terms of works tasks. He highlighted items from his report as follows:

- Hailey Road allotments wall – in line with similar works carried out last year the Town Clerk suggested obtaining quotes from contractors in order to guarantee the work;
- Football pitches – the F.A had been and inspected the pitches. The problem with all of them was compaction and they would not recommend putting in drainage as a solution. The work required would cost £25,000 but the Works Contracts Supervisor hoped he might be able to get this done for less as the spec from the F.A would bring the pitches up to County Level, which was not needed. He would bring a further report back to the Committee;
- The Leys play area had been renovated during a shutdown and the staff were blocking in the skate park ramps; he hoped the next projects would be to renovate the hedge at Thorney Leys/Curbridge Road and to realign the fence at The Leys Depot and plant hedging as screening.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the next areas of priority for completion are the Curbridge Road/Thorney Leys Hedge clear our and re planting and the realignment of the fence at The Leys Depot and the planting of hedging as screening.

A619 KINGSFIELD CRESCENT HEDGE AND NEULAND ALOTMENTS – BOUNDARY OWNERSHIP

Under public participation Mr Tremlett had addressed the committee on this issue. There was a boundary hedge between his property and the Newland allotments and he wanted to remove it as he was concerned it would cause damage to his house, and to replant the boundary with smaller shrubs /fence.

The Works Contracts Supervisor felt that he had made a good case for the hedge being on his side of the boundary, having consulted the land registry, vendor of his house and solicitors. If the Council was happy for Mr Tremlett to do the work, the boundary would have to be agreed and there may be a cost to the Council as the allotments would require a fence. Mr Tremlett at this point said that he would be happy to erect a fence.

A member asked if the allotment holders had been consulted and the Works Contracts Manager replied that he felt they would be very pleased with this. Members discussed the issues and felt that the suggestions made seemed very sensible.

RECOMMENDED: that the Works Contracts Supervisor work with Mr Tremlett to agree an actual boundary line and a report is brought back to the next meeting.

Cllr Eaglestone left the meeting at 7.25pm.

A620 **PLAY AREAS**

a) Oxlease Play Area

The Chairman updated members and reported that the application to WREN had been successful. There would be a public meeting at Cogges Church on 20 November at 2pm. It was planned to do the installation in the spring.

The Town Clerk advised that this project would need to be considered by Council and would also be subject to the Town Council's financial regulations. Therefore a third quotation would be required if under the Council's tender limit of £60,000.

The Committee offered congratulations on the obtaining of the WREN Grant to the Chairman.

b) Park Road Play Area

A public meeting had been held and there was a lot of desire for the park to re-open. The idea was for a community led project with volunteer key holders.

The Town Clerk reported that she had heard nothing from Cottsway on the land ownership. The Leader of the Council and the Town Clerk would try to speak with Cottsway again but if this was unsuccessful then the Town Clerk would put this in the hands of the solicitor.

RECOMMENDED: that the verbal updates be noted.

A621 **RIVER WINDRUSH COMMUNITY CLEAN UP**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager as circulated with the agenda. The Chairman stated that she would be happy to lead the clean up as a community initiative rather than a Council one. The Town Clerk pointed out that as a grant had been awarded the awarder would need to know where to pay the money as this would not be the Council.

RECOMMENDED: that the community clean up would have no Town Council involvement and therefore the Council would have no liability.

A622 **LAKE AND COUNTRY PARK**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager as circulated with the agenda, which included a summary of the survey results. The Chairman reported that there had been 220 responses to the survey. She hoped to gain grant funding to provide "Lake Scene" items such as bins and benches. The Town Clerk advised that grants may require match funding and it would be more appropriate for grants to be applied for by the Town Council. There was also a suggestion that if members of the public wanted to purchase a memorial bench for the town this could be a possible location.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that “lake scene” items are prioritised and that the Town Council applies for grant funding if appropriate;
3. that any recreational opportunities will be considered at a later date after the conservation and “lake scene” items have been funded.

Cllr King left at 7.55pm.

A623 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

RESOLVED: that standing order 48 (a) be suspended to allow the meeting to continue past two hours.

A624 LAKE AND COUNTRY PARK – OWNERSHIP OF BRIDGES

The Chairman verbally reported that she had spoken to Sustrans and in their opinion the railway bridges belonged to the Town Council. The Land Registry, however, had not given an answer. The Committee requested a report from Sustrans for the next meeting.

RECOMMENDED: that the Chairman’s verbal report be noted and that a report from Sustrans on the bridge ownership be requested by the Chairman for the next meeting.

A625 THE LEYS RECREATION GROUND – WITNEY SWIFTS CRICKET CLUB

The Committee received and considered the report of the Works Contracts Supervisor, concerning a request for more parking at The Leys from Witney Swifts Cricket Club. This was further to a report that had been considered by the Committee on 14 September 2015. The Club had also been in dialogue with the Chairman. The Club had asked for parking on the western wall under the trees for up to 25 cars and that they be given a key so that they can lock and unlock the gate at the start/end of their play and a sign stating that the parking was for cricket players only.

The Works Contracts Supervisor suggested that as an alternative the Council could offer ten spaces in the existing parking bays at the top of The Leys which the Club could bollard off on match days. He had concerns about parking under the trees including:-

- The club have stated that the area they wish to park in is not part of the playing area. In fact this was not the case and on hot sunny days this was the area that groups of parents with young children would sit in having picnics, playing etc. as this area was shaded by the trees where most of the rest of The Leys has little shade.
- If the gate was to be left open with just a sign to prevent other users of the Leys driving in, from past experience it is doubtful that this would prevent other users driving in and parking.
- The Club had stated the parking would be for players only but where would the spectators park? 25 cars is one per every player and the Works Contracts Supervisor believed that car sharing should be a viable option.

- The Club had not followed through on their request for a storage container which the Council gave permission for to aid issues with storage and having to carry lots of heavy bags.
- The Council had agreed to extend the yard out and plant a screen fence in part of this area which would push the cars higher up the field.
- The Council was looking at positioning a new memorial in part of this area.

A member recalled that the Council had previously said no to parking on the grass.

Cllr Morris left at 8.05pm.

The Works Contracts Supervisor felt that the Town Council had tried to help the Club as much as it could and as the RFO had highlighted earlier, it was subsidised by 62%.

A member proposed that this should be put into a letter to the club, highlighting that the Council had tried to help them and reminding them of the offer of a storage box. This was felt to be a good idea. Another member proposed that the Council should allow them limited parking on the grass and if it was seen to affect the use of the land and caused there to be other requests it could be withdrawn. The Town Clerk said that monitoring would not be possible as Town Council staff did not work at weekends. There could also be other issues as Council staff could not always park when they came to work at the depot. The member withdrew his proposal and instead proposed offering the ten spaces which the Club should bollard off. All members agreed.

The Works Contracts Supervisor commented that this could be revised in future if the option of a pathway across The Leys and the expansion of parking were installed. Members requested that a report on this be brought back to a future meeting and also that Mr Clack of the Cricket Club be invited to attend.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that Cricket Club be offered ten spaces in the existing parking bays at the top of The Leys which the Club could bollard off on match day;
3. that options for a pathway across the Leys and the expansion of parking are brought back to the next meeting;
4. that Mr Clack of Witney Swifts Cricket Club be invited to the next meeting.

A626 STRI REPORT

Members received and considered the STRI report on cricket and bowls. The Works Contracts Supervisor advised that the pitches were deteriorating and if some action was not taken now a lot of money would have to be spent in future. He had asked the contractors for a quote to do remedial work. STRI had informed him that the specification for care was not right and therefore he had sent the new spec over to the contractors.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted and consideration is deferred until the financial information is available.

A627 **MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES**

a) Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards Sub Committee – 11 October 2016

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Cemeteries and Closed Churchyards Sub Committee of 11 October 2016 as circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk advised that the lady who had wanted more access to the Windrush cemetery had appealed against the decision. An appeal panel may be required, however access was to be part of the review by Peter Mitchell so it may be possible to address the matter then.

RECOMMENDED: that the minutes be noted and the recommendations contained therein agreed.

b) Public Halls Sub Committee – 31 October 2016

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Public Halls Sub Committee of 31 October 2016 as circulated with the agenda.

The Chairman advised that she had asked the PCSOs if there were any specific problems around the Corn Exchange and they had said there were not.

RECOMMENDED: that the minutes be noted and the recommendations contained therein agreed.

c) Skate Park/ BMX Working Party – 27 October 2016

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Skate Park/BMX Working Party held on 27 October 2016 as circulated with the agenda. The Chairman reported that she had had a positive meeting with Base 33.

RECOMMENDED: that the minutes be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Chairman