

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

**Held on Monday 21 November 2016
at 6pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall**

Present

Councillor: Cllr C K Woodward (Chairman)

Councillors: C Brown
Mrs B J Churchill (sub D Temple)
P J Dorward (sub J Doughty)

C Holliday
T J Morris

Officers: Town Clerk
Works Contracts Supervisor

Responsible Financial Officer
Democratic Services Officer

Also present: 6 members of the public

C634 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for their absence were received from Cllrs Beames (who had agreed to substitute for Cllr Chirgwin), Chirgwin, Doughty, Enright and Temple.

C635 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Cllr Morris entered the meeting at 6.02pm.

C636 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

- a) that the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2016 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman
- b) there were no matters arising from the Minutes.

C637 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The meeting adjourned at 6.05pm in line with standing order 42 in order for a member of the LibFest Committee to address the Committee. The meeting resumed at 6.10pm.

C638 CHRISTMAS LIGHTS INSTALLATION AND SWITCH ON

The Works Contracts Supervisor gave a verbal update on the Christmas lights installation. This had started later than anticipated but the crews had worked through the night and were to do the same again on Monday and Tuesday, anticipating to have completed the installation by Wednesday morning.

The lighting in the trees might be different to the specification and the contractors wanted to speak to the conservation officers before installing tree lighting in Corn Street. The Works Contracts Supervisor confirmed that he would be speaking to the contractors after the installation to discuss what had been done this year. The RFO who had helped with the Christmas Lights this year added that the display might not be quite as spectacular as hoped as not all of the businesses had given permission for lights to be put up.

A member asked if the contractors had done a site survey. The Works Contracts Supervisor replied that they had said that they had done this. He may be looking for adjustments on payments to the contractors. Another member asked if all the lights would come on at the same time at the switch on. The Works Contracts Supervisor replied that he hoped to get the main square lit up at once.

Another member commented that she was concerned about there being two Father Christmases with different costumes. The Town Clerk replied that the Rotary was running the evening so it was out of the Council's control. The Chairman invited the member (Cllr Churchill) to attend the "Wash Up" meeting so that she could put her point forward.

RECOMMENDED: that the verbal update be noted.

C639 **REVISED BUDGET 2016/17 AND ESTIMATES FOR 2017/18; CAPITAL AND SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS FOR 2017/18 AND PREPARATION POOL 2018/19**

The Committee received and considered the reports of the RFO as circulated with the agenda. It also noted correspondence from Mrs Edney requesting more benches in the town as this could have budget implications. The Chairman expressed support for benches being re installed but was unsure of the best way to go about this. A member suggested that recycled plastic benches would be more hardwearing. The Chairman replied that these might not be permissible in a conservation area.

A member wondered why when the benches had been removed 9 years ago they were only now being missed. He believed they should be replaced by the Council's memorial bench policy – if someone wished to purchase a bench they could be invited to place it in one of the requested locations. The Chairman suggested that people only miss something once they need to use it. The Town Clerk added that there had been various request for benches over the years but the people in residential areas had not wanted them put back due to A S B etc.

Another member wanted to see some prices before deciding. The Works Contracts Supervisor explained that a bench was between £300 – 400. There was a general street furniture budget and members felt that it would be reasonable to allocate 10% per annum (£300) for benches – i.e. to purchase 1 per year.

The Town Clerk drew member's attention to the requirement for a new tree survey, which had last been done in 2013. The quotation circulated was for a new survey, after which any urgent works could be done. The suggestion was for this to be done in 2017/18. Members agreed that this should be included in the budget subject to approval by the Budget Working Party.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the revised budget base for 2016/17 and the estimates for 2017/18 as presented be approved;
3. that the capital project as presented by the RFO for 2017 /18 be agreed , with 10% of the street furniture budget for the next 3 years being allocated to the purchase of new benches;
4. that a new tree survey is commissioned at a cost of £3,396 be agreed for the 2017/18 year.

C640 **OPERATIONAL REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Works Contracts Supervisor as circulated with the agenda. The report updated members on works that had been done since the last meeting, which was mostly tree work, including pollarding at Burwell Recreation Ground, and the removal of a conifer at Tower Hill Cemetery. He hoped to commence work on the Curbridge Road/Thorney Leys hedge next. Letters had been sent to all residents affected.

The crocus planting that the Rotary Club had requested permission for had in fact all been done in the Langdale beds as the Witan Way ground had not been suitable.

The Works Contracts Supervisor drew attention to the confidential quotations for tree works and some additional hedge works. He would recommend using the Council's preferred tree surgeon, and for the work to be done in April/May next year. Members agreed to this.

A member asked about work to the skate park to block in the underside of the ramps. The Works Contracts Supervisor said that the work that had been completed on the first day had been destroyed by anti-social behaviour. The resulting mess was cleared up and when the weather permitted it would be redone, with the whole area being rendered to make it stronger.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the works to the Curbridge Road/Thorney Leys Hedge are the next priority;
3. that the quotation by Town and Country Trees be accepted for hedge and tree works to the Curbridge Road/Thorney Leys Hedge and carried out in April/May 2017.

C641 **DEFERRED FROM PREVIOUS MEETING : REQUEST TO PURCHASE AMENITY LAND – THORNEY LEYS**

The Chairman informed the Committee that he and Cllr Brown had met at the site and spoken to the gentleman who wished to purchase the land. Both members were undecided on how to proceed as they understood the request but also the value of amenity land.

The Town Clerk advised that the last time the Council had sold amenity land was about 10/12 years ago and the resident had to pay all legal/professional fees as well as the cost of the land. Since then the Council had declined any requests. The Chairman commented that the prospective purchaser understood that with fees it might be out of his reach.

A member asked how much the previous sale had cost. The Town Clerk replied that it had been in the region of £2,000 plus fees. If members were minded to allow the sale then there would need to be an independent valuation, which the purchaser would have to pay for. Estates were built with a certain percentage of amenity land included. The Works Contracts Supervisor added that the land was well used by children for playing on and in his opinion it was therefore valuable to the people of Witney.

A member stated that he strongly opposed any sealing off of land and that it would set a precedent if agreed to. Another member agreed and felt that the land was there for everyone to use and enjoy. Another member proposed that as the officers thought the land had value and the members who had visited were undecided, caution should be exercised and the land retained.

RECOMMENDED: that the amenity land is retained and Mr Quigley's request is denied.

C642 **CONSULTATION ON REMOVAL OF PUBLIC PAYPHONES IN WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT**

The Committee received and considered a consultation from BT on the removal of public payphones in West Oxfordshire. It considered those within Witney.

Members noted the low number of calls and that some phones had not been used at all. However members asked how many of the calls made were emergency calls. It was decided that this question needed to be asked before the Committee could make a response to the consultation. Due to the time frame, the Chairman decided that after the question had been asked of BT, the consultation should be considered at the next Full Council meeting.

A member suggested that if the phone boxes were to be taken out of commission the Town Council should adopt them and then if charities wished to offer a defibrillator they could be used as installation locations. The Town Clerk reminded members that electricity would be needed for this and there may be a cost.

RECOMMENDED: that officers ask how many of the calls made from the Witney phone boxes were emergency calls and that the response to that and the consultation is considered by the Full Council on 7 December.

C643 **LANGDALE GATE (COURT LANE) DRY STONE WALL**

The Committee received and considered a report from the Works Contracts Supervisor as circulated with the agenda concerning the wall at Langdale Gate/Court Lane which was close to collapse.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the lowest quoting company, Harris-Stone Masonry Ltd be commissioned to repair the wall.

C644 **THIRD PARTY/LARGE EVENTS – FEEDBACK FROM 2016**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Facilities Manager as circulated with the agenda, covering feedback on this year's events. There had been request for use in 2017 including free use of The Leys. The Town Clerk reminded members that the Council had recently had its pitches inspected on The Leys and they required a lot of remedial work due to compaction. The initial quotation for this was £25,000. She cautioned members to be mindful of this when considering usage.

A member agreed that he had concerns about the condition of the land but he was not against large events as long as the Council's terms and conditions were met. Another member commented that the land had taken a battering due to wet weather conditions. He could understand why people wanted to use The Leys due to its central location. The Council should work with hirers to ensure that the land was taken care of.

He added that it was not the Council's role to decide if the event was safe or not but to ensure that everything required was in place and in good time. The Council also needed to consider limiting fairs if it wished to keep Witney Feast. He was happy to recommend approval for LibFest and the Witney Music Festival for 2017.

Another member had some concerns, including the fact that the Music Festival had exceeded the number of people permitted on their licence by 1,500. The Chairman suggested that any questions were addressed to the person running the music festival (who was in attendance) after the meeting.

A member commented that the music festival was a victim of its own success and had outgrown The Leys. If they used the park next year, this should be the last time and they should look for another location.

The Town Clerk had managed to ascertain the remit of the SAG. It still existed but would only be meeting twice a year. It would be making contact with the Music Festival over the breaching of the licence.

Further discussion followed, including the requests for financial assistance in terms of waiving the hire fee. The Committee felt unable to make a decision without the financial information and therefore referred this to the forthcoming Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee discussed if an external review of an event by the Council's Health & Safety Consultant was necessary. The Works Contracts Supervisor advised that none of the Town Council staff were actually qualified to judge what was and was not needed for a large event.

The Committee asked if the external advisor could revisit his costings so that they could be justified to hirers. However, members agreed that it was wise to utilise his expertise.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the request for financial assistance be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee with financial information to aid the decision;
3. that the review of the terms and conditions was agreed with the term ADPS (Amusement Device Inspection Procedures Scheme) to be written in full; and that no booking was to be confirmed until the deposit was paid.

C645 DEAD LIME TREE ON CHURCH GREEN

The Committee received and considered correspondence from WODC alleging that Town Council planters had contributed to the death of a lime tree on Church Green. A letter had also been received from a Church Green resident complaining about the planters and the sustainable planting.

All members agreed that in the light of this the planters should be removed and beds planted up with seasonal plants and flowers instead.

RECOMMENDED: that the correspondence be noted and that the planters be removed and beds planted up with seasonal plants and flowers.

C646 PUBLIC WORK OF ART

A report was received and considered from the Arts Development Officer at WODC, giving three options for commissioning the public work of art.

Members considered these and chose option one :-

As the Town Council plans to move the monument to World War 1 out of the church to a site near the Coffee Shed, the artwork could involve the base around the monument and/or seating.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted and that the Arts Development Officer be informed that the Council preferred option one as detailed above.

C647 **DEER PARK MEDICAL CENTRE**

Cllr Churchill provided a verbal update on the closure of Deer Park Medical Centre. There was a further meeting on 29 November. She believed that more surgeries would be closed, some without consultation.

The Leader of the Council reported that he had undertaken to speak to the County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He had contacted the appropriate person only to be told he was too early and need to get in touch once the agenda had been published, which he duly did. At this point he was informed that the he was not allowed to speak as what he wished to raise had been deemed not appropriate. He proposed that the Town Council should write to the County Council expressing its disappointment with this attitude, and that the Leader had not been able to speak at the meeting. All agreed.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that a letter be written to the County Council on behalf of the Leader and the Town Council expressing disappointment with that the Leader had not been able to speak at the meeting of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to Deer Park Medical Centre.

C648 **COUNCIL EVENTS DIARY 2017 AND FEEDBACK FROM 2016 EVENTS**

a) Draft Events Diary

The Date of the Annual Town Meeting should be 15 March 2016.

The Passchendaele event needed to be added in.

b) Minutes from the Heritage Open Day 2 November 2016

The minutes were noted.

c) Minutes from the Witney Dementia Action Alliance meeting held on 4 November 2016

It was noted that Cllr Bartington had not been nominated as a representative on this group but she had offered services from the Town Council. This was not permissible as all decisions should be made by the Council as a whole body.

An offer had been made to provide further Dementia Friends Training. The Town Clerk offered to arrange this for any members that wanted to do this.

RECOMMENDED: that the draft events diary and minutes be noted.

C639 **MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES & WORKING PARTIES**

a) World War One Working Party – 10 October and 7 November 2016

The Chairman offered thanks for the officers help at the recent Somme Commemoration.

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

b) Public Transportation Working Party – 4 November 2016

The Working Party had made a recommendation to continue to support Go Ride. A member commented that as he had said previously the money allocated for this was to secure a long term solution and whilst he was happy for money to be spent to cover the Christmas period he would not like to see it to continue to be spent in this way.

The minutes were noted.

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

The meeting closed at 7.55pm.

Chairman