

ESTATES MANAGEMENT MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 30 October 2017

At 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor: P J Dorward (Chairman)

Councillors: C Brown T J Morris
B J Churchill C K Woodward
H B Eaglestone

Officers: Operations and Estates Officer Town Clerk
Democratic Services Officer
Responsible Financial Officer Public Halls Officer

Also present: 2 members of the public

E512 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for their absence were received from Cllrs King and Temple.

E513 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Churchill and Eaglestone declared non-pecuniary interests in agenda item 12 – Property Matters - as they were members of the Witney Town Hall Charity.

E514 MINUTES

- a) **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2017 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
- b) **MATTERS ARISING:** Minute E414 – Cllr Woodward advised that he had been in touch with the Mill Academy Trust regarding ownership of the boundary wall.

E515 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned in line with Standing Order 42 so that a member of the public – Ms Woodley - could address the Committee about agenda item 8 – Land at Thorney Leys.

The Committee reconvened following the address by the member of the public, and **RESOLVED** to move the agenda item in line with Standing Order 14(a)viii.

E516 LAND AT THORNEY LEYS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer, along with the discourse of the house owner who had spoken under public participation. A member had asked the house owner if she wanted to enclose the area that she was wishing to buy back from the Council and she had replied that she wished to make it a part of her garden.

A member commented that it was highly unlikely for the land to have any covenants on it and he saw no reason why the land should not be transferred back as long as they paid for it. Another member asked if the Town Council had paid for the land and it was confirmed that in fact it had been gifted to the Council by an elderly couple who had been unable to maintain it.

A member proposed that as the Council had not paid for it, it could be transferred back to the house owners if they agreed to pay the legal costs for the process but that there would be no charge for the land.

The Town Clerk commented that she thought planning permission may be required if the house owners wished to enclose it, as it was previously a piece of amenity land not previously enclosed.

The Committee was clear that costs for the transfer should be sought and communicated to the house owners so that they could change their minds if they wanted to. The Chairman proposed that the costs were taken to the next meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee in order to expedite the process. Members agreed this would be a sensible idea.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that Officers seek costs for the transfer of the land ready for the next meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on 20 November 2017.

E517 OPERATIONAL REPORT – PROGRESS ON IMPROVMENTS AND REPAIRS SINCE THE LAST MEETING

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer as circulated with the agenda. He provided updates on the entrance pillars/bollard at St. Mary's Church, ground maintenance in the churchyards and advised that he would be meeting with the tree surgeon on 3 November at Holy Trinity Churchyard to discuss works.

An update was given on the cemeteries including the conclusion of memorial stability testing at Windrush Cemetery, the arrival of wooden shuttering, removal of a footpath at Tower Hill to provide more grave spaces and issues with memorial gardens at Windrush Cemetery.

The Operations and Estates Officer advised that the bund at West Witney Sports Ground had not yet been done due to the current workload and noted that this would not stop motorcycles from accessing the grass. The Town Clerk added that she had been reporting people sleeping in vehicles parked overnight to the police.

The Operations and Estates Officer asked if the Committee wished him to prioritise the application of anti-climb paint at Burwell Hall. There were now a number of broken roof tiles there.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;

2. that the construction of the roadside bund at West Witney Sports Ground be deferred until Spring 2018;
3. that the anti-climb paint application and roof tile repairs at Burwell Hall be prioritised by the maintenance team to be undertaken as soon as possible.

E518 PUBLIC HALLS – OPERATIONS AND HALL USAGE REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Public Halls Officer and the usage figures which were circulated at the meeting.

The Public Halls Officer circulated three quotations for soft furnishings for the main hall.

Both the Mental Health Awareness Day and the Wedding Fair that had taken place had been good public relations for the hall. A successful Craft and Gift Fair had been held and the organisers had booked through to April next year.

The Chairman asked if there were still issues with the public using the toilets. The Public Halls Officer replied that there were but things were improving. Members were conscious that there were on occasion's lone workers in the building and if things did not improve, consideration may have to be given to locking/securing the toilet doors. The Town Clerk informed Members that this was a historic problem and previously toilets had been locked with keys provided in each room for the hirers to use.

The Public Halls Officer was disappointed to report that Burford School had had a party which had to be shut down early due to alcohol being brought in. Officers had worked with door staff and police to stop the event. An apology had been received from the school and the Public Halls Officer advised that he would no longer take bookings from School 6th forms. The Committee was not sure that this was the correct line of action as it seemed to tar all schools with the same brush. It was felt that as long as door staff were employed (a condition of hire) and that other terms and conditions were followed, bookings should be accepted.

Members considered the soft furnishing quotes and agreed to accept the one from Window Design. They asked the Public Halls Officer to obtain quotes for the Gallery room to be done at a later stage.

The RFO explained the usage figures as she had prepared them. The computer system did not include set up and cleaning time, although this could be introduced. It seemed from the figures that people preferred the smaller space of the Gallery Room.

It did appear that bookings had not increased, although October had been a very good month and those figures were not included. The Town Clerk advised that the Public Halls Officer had some good ideas for next year, albeit some may involve a risk to the Council such as selling tickets/poor ticket sales. Officers were also looking into feedback from users and obtaining a licence for weddings. There were further opportunities for marketing.

Members felt that a business plan should be produced by the Public Halls Officer (including marketing strategies). A member proposed that if the budget remained underspent this year, it should be carried over to next year and earmarked to protect against any potential losses from Council led events.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report and usage figures be noted;
2. that the Public Halls Officer brings a business plan for the public halls to the next meeting;
3. that any underspend from the current financial year be carried over to next year and earmarked to protect against any potential losses from Council led events;
4. that the quotation from Window Design be accepted for soft furnishings for the main Hall at the price of £2,529, with the Public Halls Officer obtaining quotes for the soft furnishings in the Gallery Room. Officers would select the design of the fabric.

E519 REVISED BUDGET 2017/18 & ESTIMATES FOR 2018/19, CAPITAL & SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS FOR 2018/19 AND PREPARATION POOL 2019/20

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

The Committee considered proposed revised cemetery charges for the forthcoming year. A member commented that he would like to see the exclusive right of burial for a child under 16 years of age reduced to £50. Other members agreed with this.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the proposed burial charges be agreed with the price for the exclusive right of burial for a child under 16 years of age being reduced to £50.
3. that the revised base budget for 2017/18 and the estimates for 2018/19 as presented be approved;
4. that the capital projects for 2018/19 that are priority and the projects to be carried forward to 2019/20 budget year as detailed in the report be approved.

E520 MADLEY PARK HALL

Members received and considered a letter from The Chairman of the Trustees of Madley Park Hall raising two issues. The first was a request for the roof to be removed from the bicycle racks due to constant vandalism and the second a request for replacement children's benches for inside the hall.

As the works team was running at capacity, the Committee requested that a price was sought for the removal of the bicycle shed roof.

Members also agreed to the purchase of eight benches at £86.84 each plus VAT, with the money being taken from the final grant due to the Hall Trust.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the correspondence be noted;
2. that a quotation is sought for the removal of the bicycle rack roof;
3. that eight benches at £86.84 each plus VAT be purchased with the money being taken from the final grant due to the Hall Trust.

E521 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

E522 WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer, providing an update on compliance issues, as circulated with the agenda. There was a discussion on how the Council should now proceed given that the time lapse since Officers first requested the compliance documentation.

The Town Clerk had provided correspondence from Witney Mills Bowls Club as they were offering to assist the Sports & Social Club to try and reach compliance, given that the clubhouse was integral to them running short mat bowls in the winter.

E523 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

E524 REVERTING TO OPEN SESSION

RESOLVED: that the Committee reverts to open session with the press and public being permitted into the meeting.

E525 WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND

A member proposed that a final date of 15 December be given to West Witney Sports & Social Club as the deadline for compliance. The Town Council had exhausted all other options in trying to help the Club with the compliance issues.

RECOMMENDED: that a date of 15 December be given to West Witney Sports & Social Club as the deadline for compliance as the Town Council had exhausted all other options in trying to help the Club with the compliance issues.

E526 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972,

the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

E527 **PROPERTY MATTERS**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk on matters relating to the allotments, Madley Park Hall, the Langdale Hall and the Buttercross.

RESOLVED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the lease to the Witney Allotment Association for the allotments at Newland, Hailey Road and Lakeside be renewed, as well incorporating the new allotments being provided via S106 at the North Curbridge development;
3. that the lease to Madley Park Hall is renewed but as a full repairing lease;
4. that the works to the Langdale Hall be noted and that the Policy and Resources Committee be requested to increase the budget for the capital works by £50,000.
5. that the Memorandum of Head of terms in respect of the lease and repairs for the tenanted property 51 Market Square be agreed and that the Policy and Resources Committee be requested to agree a budget for the repairs from the Rolling Capital Fund.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

Chairman