

**ESTATES MANAGEMENT MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Held on Monday 4 September 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	D Temple
	H B Eaglestone	C K Woodward
Officers:	Operations and Estates Officer	Public Halls Officer
	Democratic Services Officer	Responsible Financial Officer
Also present:	2 members of the public	

**E412 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for his absence was received from Cllr J S King. An apology was also received from the Town Clerk.

**E413 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**E414 MINUTES**

a) **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2017 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman;

b) **MATTERS ARISING**

Minute E323 – Cllr Woodward explained that he had not yet spoken to Henry Box School but would do so now that the school year had started again.

Minute E324 – A member asked if there was an update on the finger posts signs but there was not.

**E415 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned in line with Standing Order 42 so that a member of the public - Mr Jones could address the Committee about agenda item 6d – memorial request for the late Mr Ronald Lee.

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.

E416 **MEMORIAL REQUEST – THE LATE MR RONALD LEE**

A member commented that this was a very emotive subject but the Council also needed to consider the rules and regulations that applied to everyone.

The Chairman understood that the proposed stone was a mirror image of the existing stone and had been carved at the same time in 2002. The Operations and Estates Officer had pointed out that the original stone did not comply with regulations when it was installed in 2002 but it had been agreed by an officer who was more senior at the time. It was therefore a historical error.

After discussion the Committee agreed that on this occasion the new stone would be accepted strictly as a one off due to the historical error and everything going forward must conform to the rules and regulations without exception.

**RECOMMENDED:** that on this occasion the new stone be accepted strictly as a one off due to the historical error and everything going forward must conform to the rules and regulations without exception.

E417 **OPERATIONAL REPORT – PROGRESS ON REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS SINCE THE LAST MEETING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer as circulated prior to the meeting.

The report covered updates on the commencement of memorial stability testing in Windrush Cemetery, West Witney Sports and Social Club Compliance, car park marking and prevention of cars accessing the land at West Witney Sports Ground.

Members discussed the options for preventing cars accessing land other than the car park at West Witney Sports Ground and agreed that a bund with a locked gate for access by Council contractors would be the best option. The bollards could not yet be repaired as there had been a Council resolution not to repair them and this could not be overturned for 6 months.

A member asked what was happening with the disabled toilets. Officers replied that they were waiting for her to make recommendations. She commented that the concrete slope was slippery in the winter; it needed handrails and an emergency alarm pull.

*Cllr Morris arrived at 6.23pm.*

Members considered a request from Witney Tennis Club to lay a patio at West Witney Sports Ground adjacent to the courts. It was agreed to give permission and not to charge extra rent on the condition that the club met the cost of the work and organised it, and that it maintained and insured it. At the end of the lease they must return it to how it is laid out currently.

The Tennis Club had also asked for a path to be repaired. The Operations and Estates Officer pointed out that the Council had installed a new footpath for them which was less dangerous

as it did not lead to the road. He recommended removing the broken path and seeding the area. Members agreed with this.

The Tennis Club's final request was for the removal of a conifer. Members discussed this and decided it could only be removed if 2 other trees were planted elsewhere on site at their cost. Officers would determine the siting and type of trees. It was also noted that the Council, as a member of the Tree Charter, should encourage tree planting.

The Operations and Estates Officer had received a quote for defensive planting around Burwell Hall. However, the Council had received many compliments about the current floral planting, including one regular user who had written in. The Operations and Estates Officer suggested that if members wanted to keep the floral planting, a coat of anti-climb paint could be applied to the weather board and guttering. The Committee thought this was a better option.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that a bund by the road leading to the far car park at West Witney Sports Ground including a locked gate for Council access only be constructed;
3. that Witney Tennis Club be given permission to install a patio area at no extra rent on the condition that the club meets the cost of the work and organises it, and that it maintains and insures it. At the end of the lease they must return the area to how it is laid out currently;
4. that the old broken path by the Tennis Courts leading to the road is not repaired but that the slabs are removed and the area be grassed over;
5. that the conifer tree adjacent to the tennis courts be removed only if 2 other trees are planted elsewhere on site at the cost of the tennis club. Officers will determine the siting and type of trees;
6. that defensive planting is not installed at Burwell Hall, but that the weather board and guttering be recoated with anti-climb paint.

**E418 CEMETERIES AND CLOSED CHURCHYARDS**

a) St Mary's Churchyard/Holy Trinity Churchyard - Trees

The Committee received and considered the reports of the Operations and Estates Officer as circulated prior to the meeting. After much discussion, members agreed that it would be sensible to have a meeting with the Church to discuss a planned schedule of works.

As the District Council's Tree Officer was happy with proposed tree work in Holy Trinity Churchyard, a member proposed that the Council should pay for it accepting that this set a precedent as it was outside the Council's tree policy. Members all agreed.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the reports be noted;
  - 2) that Cllrs Morris and Chirgwin and the Operations and Estates Officer meet with the Church to discuss a schedule of planned works;
  - 3) that the tree works in Holy Trinity is carried out at a cost of £600 to the Council.
- b) Burial Charges – review

The Committee received and considered the report of the Cemetery Officer and a schedule of proposed new charges as circulated with the agenda. Most members felt that the Council's charging was rather low but one member disagreed and did not want to raise the level of charge as it would be a burden to grieving families. He would prefer that the cost of running the cemeteries was met from the precept.

A discussion followed and members decided that more work needed to be done. The committee requested comparisons made with other market towns of a similar size/local towns, proposals for charges to those from outside the area, and a breakdown of how the costs were made up.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the report be noted;
  - 2) that comparisons are made with other market towns of a similar size/local towns, with proposals for charges to those from outside the area, and a breakdown of how the costs were made up and that this is brought back to the next meeting of the Committee.
- c) Towerhill Cemetery – Update on Grave Space

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer. As circulated with the agenda. The last footpath was about to be removed to make way for 20 new graves. In approximately 18 months the cemetery would need to be closed for burials. Members felt that in this situation Tower Hill should only accept burials from people living in Witney at the time of their death and not from those out of the town.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- 1) that the report be noted;
- 2) that Tower Hill Cemetery does not accept any burials from people outside of the town.

d) Windrush Cemetery – future maintenance/layout

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer as circulated prior to the meeting. He reported that the Works Team had tried out wooden shuttering loaned by Abingdon Town Council and it had worked well.

He had investigated concrete beams but no one used them if the cemetery was on a slope. It was likely that concrete would stick out of the ground. He felt that the wooden shuttering would solve the issue of graves collapsing and would also allow memorials to be sited on virgin ground.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that authority be given to the Operations and Estates Officer to purchase two sets of wooden shuttering if the first set proved successful;
3. that at the present time the Council does not install concrete beams in the cemetery.

E419 **PUBLIC HALLS – OPERATIONS AND HALL USAGE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Public Halls Officer and the Bookings Administrator as circulated prior to the meeting. It provided an update on works done in the halls in terms of maintenance.

A member remarked that the usage figures were creeping up slightly although overall they seemed low. The RFO commented that the figures were somewhat distorted by the way that they were produced by the software. She would ask the software company to come in and see what could be done.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the RFO works with the software company on the bookings data and that a report is brought back to the next Full Council meeting;
3. that numbers attending be recorded for every booking,

E420 **FINANCIAL REPORT**

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

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

E421 **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.

**E422  GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT – UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered a confidential report from the Operations and Estates Officer as circulated with the agenda.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the revised bill of quantities be agreed.

**E423  PROPERTY MATTERS**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk as circulated prior to the meeting.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that Alder King be employed in relation to Cemetery Lodge lease.

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The meeting closed at 7.55pm.

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Chairman