

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

**Held on Monday 15 January 2018**

**At 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall**

**Present:**

Councillor: C Brown (Chairman)

Councillors: B J Churchill D Temple  
T J Morris C K Woodward

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

Also present: 1 member of the public

**E020 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

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

**E021 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Churchill and Woodward declared non pecuniary interests as they were members of the Witney Corn Exchange Trust in relation to agenda item 6 – {Public Halls}.

**E022 MINUTES**

- a) **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2017 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
- b) **MATTERS ARISING:** there were no matters arising from the minutes to be discussed at the meeting.

**E023 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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

**E024 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 an update on Closed Churchyards and explained that a meeting had been held with St. Mary's Church which both sides had found extremely productive and had fostered a better relationship. There were also updates on the wooden shuttering which was awaiting its first use and the memorial gardens at the Cemetery.

The Operations and Estates Officer advised that West Witney Sports and Social Club was now broadly compliant – he would ideally like an entire year's worth of documentation –

although he did have some concerns about the replacement external staircase as they had put in a plinth to make up for the fact that the staircase was slightly too short (one more step would have cost significantly more) and this was now a trip hazard. He had advised that the whole patio area as you come out of the changing rooms should be raised instead.

A member asked if the toilet was now DDA compliant. The Town Clerk advised that this was something that the Town Council would need to sort out as it had procured and installed it quite a while ago. The Chairman asked the Operations and Estates Officer to look into this.

The report also updated members on the footpath and tree removal at the tennis club, a request from the Grounds Maintenance Contractors to switch to rotary mowers and the revised Bill of Quantities for the Grounds Maintenance Contract.

The Operations and Estates Officer advised that the Langdale Hall renovations were progressing although there had been issues with the builder's health and safety. He was keeping a careful eye on proceedings. At present he thought that the moving date would be 5 March. ICE had indicated that this would be acceptable.

A member noted that the report stated that PAT testing was now complete and asked if this was a drain on resources. The Operations and Estates Officer replied that they now had just one member of staff doing this and it was not too bad. The member asked if it would be worth obtaining quotes for an external company to come in and do this. The Operations and Estates Officer agreed to research this option.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the final changes within the costs of the Grounds Maintenance Contract BOQ to address the anomalies be agreed;
3. that the Grounds Maintenance Contract Specification change request to cut the streets and estates grass with rotary mowers rather than cylinder mowers be agreed;
4. that the Operations and Estates Officer looks into the DDA compliance at West Witney Sports Ground;
5. that the Operations and Estates Officer obtains quotations for PAT testing.

**E025 PUBLIC HALLS**

a) Operations and Hall Usage Report

The Committee received and considered the report of the Public Halls Officer and the usage figures.

He reported that December had been really busy. A member thanked the staff for coming in during the inclement weather in December. There had been some staffing issues as one member of staff had been off sick for a month which had impacted on the other staff's time.

Some maintenance had been done in the Corn Exchange Main Hall including touching up paint. The soft furnishing company were due out that week and City Audio Visual were also coming to look at what could be done in terms of improving acoustics.

There had been issues with access from the SOTA Gallery owner in Langdale Gate who objected to anyone parking near the hall to load and unload, despite the fact that it was Council owned land. The Town Clerk advised that the police had been involved on one occasion. Members were very disappointed to hear this and asked if the SOTA gallery owner had raised a formal complaint. The Public Halls Officer advised that he had not.

The usage figures were a little better. A member asked going forward to see the figures for the whole of 2017 so that they could be compared to 2018. Another member asked for a year to date column to be added to the usage figures.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the reports and usage figure be noted;
2. that the usage figures for the whole of 2017 be presented and that the usage figures have an additional column “Year to Date” added.

b) Business Plan

The Committee received and considered the Public Hall’s Officers draft business plan which was tabled at the meeting. A member said that it was a good start but it told members what they already knew. It needed more “meat to the bones” – to tell the Council what the plan ahead was – i.e. how is business attracted, what would the income be, how marketing money would be spent and what the outcome of this would be. The business plan should be a plan for the future.

The Town Clerk reiterated to the Public Halls Officer that he had free reign to put events on – he did not need to wait for permission.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the plan be noted but that more detailed work including financial information be carried out.

**E026 TREE DAMAGE AT ST. MARY’S CHURCHYARD (T583 AND T570)**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer as circulated with the agenda. The December snow had caused a lot of damage to cedars around the country and one in St. Mary’s churchyard had been very badly damaged with falling branches damaging the tombs below. Another tree had been fenced off as it had several limbs hanging from it.

A quote had been obtained from the tree surgeon at a cost of £2,100 plus VAT. The District Council’s Tree Officer was happy with the proposal but approval would be needed from the Diocese. He would approach them to see if an interlocutory faculty could be obtained. Any badly damaged stones that were a danger would be fenced off.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Operations and Estates officer be given authority to expedite, commission and complete the works as soon as all quotes are received, all of the relevant parties are in agreement and any faculty has been gained;
3. that the Operations and Estates Officer be allowed to carry out any urgent memorial stability works required in the area once the tree work has been completed;
4. that the Operations and Estates Officer carries out any works required to the yew trees/bushes using either the works team or Continental Landscapes.

**E027 FINANCIAL REPORT**

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

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

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The meeting closed at 7.03pm.

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Chairman