

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

**Held on Monday 2 July 2018**

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

**Present:**

Councillor: P J Dorward (Chairman)

Councillors: C Brown H B Eaglestone  
B J Churchill J S King  
J M Doughty (sub C Holliday) C K Woodward

Non Committee Member : A McMahon

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

Also present: 1 member of the public

**E348 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for his absence was received from Cllr Holliday.

**E349 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr King declared an interest in agenda item 9 – West Witney Sports Ground – as his wife was a member of the bowls club.

**E350 MINUTES**

- a) **RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2018 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.

**E351 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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

**E352 COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR**

The Committee received and considered the work programme for the municipal year as circulated prior to the meeting. The majority of issues were either in progress or being dealt with by the solicitors.

It was noted that the bund for West Witney Sports Ground was now an urgent priority as it would increase site security and prevent it from being accessed by travellers.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the work programme be noted.

E353 **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 closed church yards, tree works and ground maintenance works at the other cemeteries. He also had two requests: one from a resident requesting that pedestrian gates be put back at King George V Field which had been removed many years ago as they had not been repairable and another to look at the bollards at Little Green which were in a poor state of repair.

He added that a Chinese juniper had recently been stolen from Tower Hill Cemetery – this was an expensive tree.

A member referred to the bollards at Little Green and suggested that large rocks might be a good replacement. Members liked this idea and requested a quotation be sought.

Members also thought that it would be a good idea to get quotes for replacing the pedestrian gate at King George V Field.

The Committee also received and considered a complaint from Mr Marshall who hired the Corn Exchange on 8 June 2018 for a music event and was claiming the building was not fit for purpose, and that he had not been informed that equipment needed to be PAT tested. He had also complained about the power arrangement and the fact that the haze used had set off the fire alarm. They had been told that smoke/haze of any kind was not permitted prior to the event.

A member pointed out that in signing the hire contract, Mr Marshall had agreed that his equipment would be PAT Tested. The Operations and Estates Officer advised that the Public Halls Officer had offered to PAT Test the equipment, but the response had been so aggressive that he had been advised not to persist.

The Public Halls Officer added that the building had been used for several other music events without any problems.

*Cllr Doughty entered the meeting at 6.10pm.*

Members felt that officers should be fully supported in carrying out their duties and that the hirers should have followed the terms and conditions that they had signed.

A member recalled that in the Langdale Hall, the central electrical circuit had deactivated if the fire alarm went off and suggested that this could be introduced in the Corn Exchange. This idea was very much supported by other members.

The Committee expressed great concern over the “cavalier” attitude of the hirers.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that quotations for replacing the bollards with rocks at Little Green be sought;

3. that a report be brought to the next meeting on the possibility of fitting new pedestrian gates to King George V Field including approximate costs;
4. that following the complaint about the Corn Exchange, a system be introduced whereby the central power circuit deactivates if the fire alarm was set off and also that a power supply directly to the stage be installed.

E354 **PUBLIC HALLS - OPERATIONS AND HALL USAGE REPORT**

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

The Public Halls officer reported that two new booking administrators had now started and he was very impressed with them.

*Cllr McMahon entered the meeting at 6.30pm.*

There was some discussion about large black drapes which had been donated to the Corn Exchange by BMW. It was felt that they may help with the acoustics and also lend a dramatic feel to the hall.

Members also wanted to investigate stage lighting options and decided to invite Mr Terry Powell to the next meeting for his advice.

It was agreed to hold the meeting on site so that the Committee could have a walk around the building. The Town Clerk advised that this would sit well with the budget setting coming in November and giving consideration to the next phase of redevelopment.

Members noted the usage figures, which were consistent.

The Committee also considered revised quotations for curtains for the Gallery Room. Members decided to accept the quote from Window Design which had done the other curtains in the building.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the reports and usage figure be noted;
2. that the next meeting be held in the Corn Exchange and Mr Terry Powell be invited;
3. that the quotation for curtains in the Gallery Room from Window design be accepted.

E355 **LANGDALE HALL – LEASE TO ICE – COMMUNITY USE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. In the lease, D1 use had been agreed. However, a request from the ICE Centre had been received as they wanted to hire out the hall for things that did not fall under the D1 category.

The Town Clerk advised that the ICE Centre's hire charges were cheaper than the Town Council's as they were not VAT registered.

Members debated the fact that it would effectively be competition for the Corn Exchange but decided that they would agree to give special permission for the hires as specified at this time. However, the ICE Centre needed to keep communicating with the Council in respect of any other potential hirers.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the ICE Centre be given permission to hire out the building for :

Karate  
PT with a mindset coach  
Psychic Fair  
21<sup>st</sup> Birthday party  
New Year's Eve Las Vegas Theme Night  
Battlebarn Boxing Event  
Wheelchair dance gala  
WI meetings  
80<sup>th</sup> Birthday barn dance  
Age UK meetings  
Gigarts  
Age UK seated dance.

All other requests must be submitted to the Council.

**E356 WEST WITNEY SPORTS GROUND**

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that she would ask the Council's land agent to address the Committee about the proposals that the Council had had or may have in the future.

*The Town Clerk and Cllr Eaglestone left the meeting at 6.50pm. The member of the public also left at the same time.*

The Committee received and considered a verbal update from the Council's nominated representative, Cllr Dorward. There were some new people involved with the club and it seemed as though they were making money again.

The Club had put in a new fire escape and he wondered if the Town Council should contribute/pay for it. The Operations and Estates Officer advised that he had been thinking on similar lines but despite offering a meeting he had not met with the club. Cllr Dorward replied that they would be happy to meet with him now, even during the daytime.

It was reported that a lot of money was being spent on drain clearance. The Sports and Social Club alleged that it was West Witney Bowls Club causing the blockage but they were refusing to contribute to the cost of clearing it.

The Operations and Estates Officer commented that at this point it was not actually known who was causing the blockage. He felt that all involved on the site should work together to sort out the problem.

A member commented that perhaps all of the site users should pay an annual maintenance fee. If the Council did get involved the users should be charged an administrative fee. It was thought to be a good idea if the concept of a maintenance fee was included in future leases.

As discussed earlier, the bund would now be a priority. There was an issue with site security as the gate was being left unlocked. The Sports and Social Club were complaining that they were being called out after hours as people had been locked in the site as it was not known they were present. The Operations and Estates Officer suggested that a height barrier would be a way of adding to the security of the site. The Committee asked him to investigate costs.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the verbal report be noted;
2. that the Sports and Social Club be advised that all involved should work together and contribute to the costs for resolving the blockages; if they did not then the Town Council would step in but would be charging an admin/maintenance fee.
3. that the Operations and Estates Officer investigates the cost of putting in a height barrier at the entrance.

**E357 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

**E358 INVESTIGATION INTO ALLEGED BREACH OF THE COUNCIL'S TERMS AND CONSIDITIONS OF HIRE AND HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Operations and Estates Officer.

**RECOMMENDED:** as per the confidential appendix.

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The meeting closed at 7.30pm.

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Chairman

CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX TO THE ESTATES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES – 2 JULY 2018

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Operations and Estates Officer, explain the events that had occurred at the event held by the Witney Music Festival (WMF) on 8 June 2018 at the Corn Exchange.

Members were appalled at what had happened and felt that they should be charged for the damage to the fire alarm panel. It was noted that the deposit would not cover the charges.

A member said that both the Operations and Estates Officer and the Town Clerk had done an excellent job at the Council meeting the previous week. She had since spoken to the directors – Jim Ashby and Matt Keeble – who appeared to be reasonable people. It transpired that Craig Raven was in fact an employee. The directors were attempting to rectify matters and the revised EMP had been submitted as requested on the previous Friday. The member felt that they would pay for the damages and the first step should be to meet with them rather than start legal proceedings.

The Operations and Estates Officer added that he first wanted to establish what damage had been caused by those on site on the night before proceeding.

A member stated that his overriding concern was their failure to vacate the building when the fire alarm had gone off. He wanted the directors to understand that if something happened at the festival on The Leys, it must be shut down immediately.

Another member stated that he had concerns that they had demonstrated bad event management and yet the same company would be used for the larger event. Another member understood this but said that the Council could not tell them whom to use.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that Jim Ashby and Matt Keeble as directors of the WMF be invited to meet with the Town Council's working party to discuss the main event further.