

**MARLBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL
AMENITIES & OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a **Meeting** of the **Amenities & Open Spaces Committee** which was held on **Monday, 30th January 2017** in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Marlborough** at 7.55 pm

PRESENT	Councillor L. Farrell Councillor B. Castle Councillor A. Ross Councillor A. Kirk Wilson Councillor Mrs M. Rose Councillor A. Light	Chairman
ALSO PRESENT	Mrs S. Parker Mrs D. Whitehall Mr R. Beale Councillor M. Hall Plus 4 members of the public	Town Clerk Administrator Grounds Manager Observing

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Mrs J Ford, Resident – Mrs Ford had been stung by a bee in Stonebridge Meadow in 2016. At the time she had not seen any signs at the Poulton Footbridge entry to the Meadow to warn of beehives being present, and on approaching a Marlborough Town Council staff member for help she had been told there were no first aid kits in Town Council vehicles. Was this correct, and would warning signs be put up in future when/if the beehives were moved? **The Chairman** apologised that the answer had been inadequate and misleading. The **Grounds Manager** confirmed that first aid kits were carried in all Town Council vehicles, but they were not permitted to include sting ease creams or antihistamines because they should only be administered by a qualified medical practitioner. He believed signage had been erected, but that it was sometimes the case that signs or other items erected by the Town Council to ensure public safety were removed by people using the Meadow. The **Grounds Manager** would investigate whether there was adequate signage.

Miss J Clark, Resident – referred to the 2015 Management Plan for Stonebridge Meadow showing an area set aside for amenity, but where a number of ‘scrapes’ had rendered the land very boggy or under water in winter time. She asked whether more scrapes were planned and how this would affect the amount of usable land available as an amenity area. **The Chairman** confirmed that this would form part of the discussion for Agenda Item 9.

490/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the Town Mayor and Cllr. Hannaford-Dobson.

491/16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr. Light – agenda item 17 – Priory Gardens – non-pecuniary.

492/16 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

493/16 MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held on Monday, 31st October 2016 were a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

494/16 TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

Members noted the Town Clerk's report.

495/16 GROUNDS MANAGER'S REPORT

Members noted the Grounds Manager's report and considered his recommendations.

The Cemetery

Disturbance and damage by moles had become a major issue with some sections badly affected with graves at risk of being disturbed. Sonic deterrents and other methods had not been successful. Professional advice was that the cemetery be closed for 36 hours for safety purposes. (The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) has also been contacted). The closure would be timed to minimise disturbance to the public and avoid disruption to burials.

Line Marker

The sports pitch line marker was now more than 10 years old and had been repaired a number of times and was now unreliable.

RESOLVED: to proceed with mole control within the Cemetery and to its closure for a safety period of 36 hours

RESOLVED: to authorise the purchase of a new line marker at the start of the 2017/18 financial year at a cost of £578.85

496/16 MARLBOROUGH COMMON

Members noted a report and recommendations from the Grounds Manager about the plan for replacement trees along Frees Avenue as well as suitable areas for event parking. The minutes and recommendations from the most recent Common Users Group were also considered.

Trees at Frees Avenue

The plan for the replacement of felled, diseased trees would be ready by mid-summer to allow for the trees to be ordered in time for the autumn planting season. Councillors were invited to view catalogues. The Town Clerk was liaising with the Free family.

Event Parking

Following 2 site meetings and guided by a plan drawn up by the Grounds Manager, Members considered areas where car parking could be provided on The Common for events (not for everyday parking). It would be important to avoid damage to The Common - some areas were becoming rutted due to heavy vehicles driving across unprotected areas in wet weather. Suitable locations considered were:

- Two areas which represented a continuation of the existing trackside parking where reinforcing mesh could be laid to protect the grass
- The site of the old Military Hospital/Secondary School. It was already a hard surface which, over time, had been covered with a thin layer of soil in some places, which could be pushed to the sides to create a natural boundary for the car parking area. It was estimated it could accommodate up to 100 cars. This was the lowest cost option and the soil covering could be easily reinstated if the proposal, which could be taken on as a trial, was not successful.

RESOLVED: that the site of the old Military Hospital/Secondary School was the preferred option for event car parking on The Common

Security, keys and access

Security around vehicular access to The Common had recently been improved by replacing a combination lock with a key system. This had been effective in preventing unauthorised access. However, a number of regular users of The Common came from different parts of the country (e.g. for pigeon liberations) and it was not always practical for there to be one key holder for each organisation. Requests had been received for either multiple keys or a coded key safe to be installed.

RESOLVED: to delegate to the Grounds Manager to install a combination key safe in a suitable location

Dog mess and litter

The Common Users Group recommended additional bins be installed to help with the campaign against litter and dog mess.

RESOLVED: to provide one additional waste bin near the Golf Course

497/16

COOPERS MEADOW

Members considered a report from the Town Clerk concerning the re-issuing of the grazing licence and possible future recreational use of the meadow. It had been suggested that a small area of the current grazing space could be opened up for informal use by young people. It would not be a formal area for playing organised sport but one with wooden benches or a shelter in keeping with the meadow.

With S106 money already in place for upgrading the existing play area (quotes had been obtained by the Grounds Manager and consultation underway with young people) there was an opportunity to apply for grants to match this funding to move the fences and gate and create a new recreational area. The size of the grazing area would not need to be hugely reduced and the new amenity area could be

designed in a complementary way. ARK had itself made plans for a recreation area when original plans were put forward at the beginning of its work in the meadow a few years previously.

Main discussion points included:

- That there was continued support for re-issuing the grazing licence to enable sheep to graze in a designated area of the meadow
- The admirable conservation work undertaken by ARK in the meadow
- Town centre green open space options for young people were limited as Priory Gardens was closed during early evening daylight hours in the summer months and excluded dogs, cycles and ball games
- Wiltshire Council's Open Spaces Strategy identified that there was inadequate green open space provision in the town for young people and recommended that it should be addressed
- Action for the River Kennet (ARK) were supportive of a slight reduction to the grazing area and it presented no problem to the sheep farmer
- Whether improvements could be made to combat the natural flooding during winter months
- Whether there were alternatives to providing recreational green space
- Whether this would add additional maintenance requirements.
- Whether this would further complement the project to improve facilities to visitors by re-opening George Lane toilets and exploring additional options such as a small tourist information point
- That more details needed to be considered before any firm decision could be made.

RESOLVED: to re-issue the grazing licence for 2017 and that more plans are brought forward for a potential project to open up the meadow for informal recreational space for young people.

498/16

STONEBRIDGE MEADOW

Members noted the draft minutes of the Stonebridge Management Committee which met on 11th January 2017, a report and recommendations by the Grounds Manager and feedback following a walkabout at the site by members of the A&OS Committee.

Black Poplar Trees

- ARK, through the Stonebridge Management Committee, had requested permission to plant Black Poplar saplings between the meadow and the Football Club
- This area had previously been proposed as a possible extension to football provision for the town
- Whilst no decision had been made on extending football provision, Members recognised that if the request were granted there would be reluctance to move these rare trees once established, ruling out this location for the extension of football facilities in future
- Whether other suitable locations could be identified for trees, including to screen the buildings in Elcot Lane Business Park

RESOLVED: the proposed location for the Black Poplar saplings was unsuitable and that an alternative site be identified

Amenity Area: Grass Cutting At the River Bank

Discussion centred on the length of grass at the river bank at the amenity area.

During a suspension of Standing Orders **Anna Forbes** (ARK) provided some background to an on-site meeting with Members of the A&OS Committee where majority agreement had been reached to maintain the grass at knee height. An offer for ARK volunteers to do this work had been rejected at the time. It was desirable to maintain a certain amount of growth to prevent soil erosion and this was set out in the Stonebridge Meadow Management Plan (SMMP).

Main points raised included that:

- A request had been made by Cllr. Rose and members of the public for the grass to be kept shorter to enable access to and visibility of the river bank in the amenity area
- A scheme to improve the existing beach area was awaited
- The Management Plan was subject to annual review, with the last review taking place in 2015. The Town Clerk recommended that a review should take place to look at outstanding actions, etc.
- It was noted that a small number of enquiries, complaints and requests had been received from the community including formal Freedom of Information requests.
- Whether an open consultative meeting could be held to include the Town Council, ARK and members of the community.

RESOLVED: to hold an open consultative meeting in early to mid-March 2017 to discuss Stonebridge Meadow and its Management Plan

Footpath 45

Wiltshire Council's Rights of Way Officer had cut back the official route of Footpath 45 in 2016 and had urged that the Grounds Team continue to maintain it. Its maintenance as a path was legally binding. To change this route would require a formal application to divert it which was a long process and may be costly.

RESOLVED: to delegate to the Grounds Manager to maintain FP45 and cut back growth as specified by the Rights of Way Officer 2-3 times each year

Reed Bed Location and Size

The Grounds Manager had ascertained that the reed bed was approximately 10 meters further into the Meadow than originally planned, largely as a result of ARK having to avoid BT service cables. During a recent site visit Members felt a compromise on the extent of the scrape could be reached and feared that it would restrict the use of the area for amenity purposes. It was recognised that making permanent alterations at this stage might prove costly and would need feasibility plans put in place.

RESOLVED: to include the 'scrape' in the overall Stonebridge Meadow open meeting and review of the Management Plan

Summer Event

A suggestion had been made that a summer event take place in the Meadow to launch a proposed nature trail. This would provide good publicity and was an excellent opportunity to engage with young people. Members were supportive of the idea and it was possible that funding could be requested as a contribution from the Town Council's event budget in 2017/18.

Two members of the public and Cllr. Hall left the meeting

499/16

CEMETERIES

Cemetery

Members noted the minutes of the meetings of the Cemetery Working Party and considered its recommendations.

RESOLVED:

- i) To install an Oak Notice Board at the Cemetery entrance at a cost of £800
- ii) To approve the reviewed Cemetery Regulations and Information Leaflet
- iii) That the area recommended in a plan by the Grounds Manager should be adopted as additional space for cremations and child/baby graves
- iv) To proceed with repainting the Cemetery gates. This would include a cost of £700 for sand blasting and priming
- v) To defer a decision on improvements to pedestrian access until costings were available
- vi) To obtain quotations for a new sign for The Cemetery
- vii) To proceed with the recommended floral displays and to approach funeral directors and stonemasons to seek sponsorship
- viii) To replace the dilapidated metal fence with hedging
- ix) To defer a decision on resurfacing the road until more information was available.

Expenditure would be a charge to the A&OS projects budget.

Mrs Chapman was commended for her work towards this project.

Old Victorian Cemetery

Members noted a report by the Town Clerk and considered proposed improvements, health & safety issues and a request from the Women's Institute concerning the Old Victorian Cemetery

RESOLVED:

- i) To commission a safety inspection and staff training from the ICCM
- ii) To delegate to the Town Clerk to proceed with the no cost/low cost requests from the Friends of the Victorian Cemetery
- iii) To agree that the Old Cemetery be entered into the 2017 South West in Bloom competition in the Its Your Neighbourhood category
- iv) To defer a decision on the draft constitution until it had reviewed by the Town Clerk

- v) To grant permission to the Women's Institute to hold a historical talk at the Old Victorian Cemetery

Exclusive Rights of Burial and Notices of Interment Issued

RESOLVED: Members noted recent Exclusive Rights of Burial and Notices of Interments issued

RESOLVED: Members noted approved memorials and inscriptions

500/16

MEETING BETWEEN ELCOT LANE PLAYING FIELDS COMMITTEE, THE TOWN COUNCIL AND MARLBOROUGH TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB

Members noted a report by the Grounds Manager following a meeting between the Elcot Lane Playing Fields Committee, the Town Council and Marlborough Town Football Club (MTFC) to discuss the possibility of additional pitches at the Village Green.

RESOLVED: The Town Clerk to follow up with the Open Spaces Society concerning uses of the Village Green under its designation and bring this advice back to the committee and that any decision would need more information to be submitted by Marlborough Town Football Club.

501/16

PLUME OF FEATHERS GARDEN

Members noted a report by the Town Clerk and considered a request from the Richmond Fellowship for various activities and changes at the garden over the coming year. The main proposal was an aim to improve community engagement by making a second entrance from Kelham Gardens in the wall to line up with the painted door which was part of the Mencap mural. Discussion points included:

- That the proposals for activities for young people were welcome and were to be commended
- It was hoped that the mural would remain at the garden
- Funding implications of the creation of a new entrance
- The status of the wall (i.e. whether it was listed)
- Whether it was more practical to create an entrance through the fence/hedge
- Access across the strip of Wiltshire Council-owned land behind the wall
- Future maintenance of the garden and collection of any additional litter if the garden was used more by the community
- Whether a new entrance would need to be locked at night.

RESOLVED: Members welcomed the Fellowship's continued work with young people and, in principle, supported the proposal for another entrance to the gardens pending further details of the proposal

A member of the public left the meeting

502/16

ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

Members noted the minutes of the Allotment Association of 7th December 2016 and a report by the Town Clerk following her meeting with its representatives.

RESOLVED: (i) priority is given to outstanding agreed works, most particularly moving the gate at the Elcot Lane site, plot markers at all sites and the removal of willows at Stonebridge

RESOLVED: (ii) Permission is granted for the erection of a shed at Stonebridge Meadow

RESOLVED: (iii) a review is carried out on Allotment Agreements and rents

503/16

OPEN SPACES CHARGES

RESOLVED: to adopt the proposed fees for the use of open spaces for 2017/18

504/16

MARLBOROUGH IN BLOOM (MiB)

Cllr. Kirk Wilson read out a letter from Mr S Pascal, an MiB committee member, thanking the Grounds Team for their efforts in the town and suggesting that the Town Council could support the 2017 MiB campaign by focusing on issues of litter and dog fouling. Members noted that litter and dog fouling were already on the agenda for the Town Council and asked the Town Clerk to reply to Mr Pascal.

Cllr Kirk Wilson updated Members about MiB activities and plans towards the South West in Bloom competition. Committee members were still considering the theme for this year, one suggestion being rainwater gardens.

505/16

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted

A member of the public left the meeting

506/16

PRIORY GARDENS

Members noted a report by the Town Clerk and considered recommendations about the public gardens and new signage.

RESOLVED: (i) to reject the suggested amendments to the Path Agreement

Cllr. Light did not vote

The meeting closed at 10.35 pm

Signed:

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Town Mayor

Date