

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

Minutes of a meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held on Monday, 3 February 2020 in the
Court Room, Town Hall, Marlborough at 8.05 pm

PRESENT:	Councillor D. Heath	Chairman
	Councillor M. Hall	Town Mayor
	Councillor B. Castle	
	Councillor A. Ross	
	Councillor M. Cooper	
	Councillor V. Hillier	
ALSO PRESENT:	Mrs S. Parker	Town Clerk
	Mrs D. Whitehall	Administrator
	Mr N. Weatherly	Grounds Manager
	Councillor G. Loosmore	Observing
	Councillor A. Wilson	Observing
	Councillor S. Dobson	Wiltshire Councillor – Marlborough East
	Mr N. Goodwin	Marlborough.News
	Ms N. Hinman	Gazette & Herald and Wiltshire Times
	Plus 28 members of the public	

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Cllr. Dobson (Wiltshire Councillor, Marlborough East) – asked whether the Chairman would suspend Standing Orders at the appropriate points on the agenda to allow those present to contribute. The **Chairman** confirmed he was already planning to do so.

Richard Pitts – since asking a question at Full Town Council on 20 January 2020 about mowing of Marlborough Common, Mr Pitts had spoken with the **Town Clerk** regarding the Common Users Group (**CUG**). He referred to local groups **Transition Marlborough** and Action for the River Kennet (**ARK**) and, on behalf of all, there was willingness to join an advisory panel or committee to offer expert advice to the Town Council.

Five people, including former Mayor **Mrs Hannaford-Dobson** and **Mr Neale** (Marlborough Town Football Club), asked questions about a proposed access between Stonebridge Close and Stonebridge Meadow:

- Whether there was documentary evidence confirming ownership of the strip of land in question
- Whether there had ever been an entrance at the proposed point
- Whether there was an existing, legal right of way into the meadow via Marlborough Town Football Club (MTFC)
- Whether the overwhelming negative response to the consultation was being properly taken account of
- Whether Town Councillors for the East Ward were supporting the concerns of residents

The **Town Clerk** clarified land ownership issues and the Chairman thanked local residents for raising their questions. Comments would be considered at the relevant agenda item.

Sandra Rogers – asked for the Town Council's policy on climate change. She was not alone in Marlborough in being concerned about the climate crisis and interested in practical ways that residents could help to meet the challenge and its potential consequences. Would

the Town Council take action to join up the various groups such as Transition Marlborough, ARK, and schools. She believed working together could result in something quite remarkable and asked that the Town Council brought this together.

449/19 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Barrett-Morton, Farrell and Cairns.

450/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations.

451/19 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

452/19 MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held 18 November 2019 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman

453/19 RECEIPT OF PETITION

During a suspension of Standing Orders, **Mrs Doreen Davies** read a statement in support of all those residents of Stonebridge Close (50 out of 56) who had signed a petition objecting to a proposal for an access into Stonebridge Meadow from Stonebridge Close.

“We the undersigned residents of Stonebridge Close object to Marlborough Town Council’s and ARK’s proposal to create an access from our residential street into Stonebridge Meadow breaching the hedge at the north side of the turning area.

There is no evidence that there ever was a previous access at this point which was created by the Stonebridge Close developers as a turning point for vehicles.

Not only will it devalue properties, there is also the concern that at a later date it will encourage dog walkers and allotment holders, etc. to park their vehicles in the Close causing obstruction to the residents.

The sub-standard junction of Stonebridge Close with Elcot Lane also serves a major engineering works, some small business units and Marlborough Ambulance Station.

This junction is certainly not suitable for increased use especially by tractors with trailers or possible cattle lorries. MTC and ARK have not stated why they want an access from Stonebridge Close into the Stonebridge Meadow.

The owner of Stonebridge Meadow already has a lawful agricultural right of way through Marlborough Town Football Club land, so why is a second access necessary?

Signatures and addresses of people living in Stonebridge Close or having any interest in the properties in this cul de sac were presented to the most recent Full Town Council.

This petition is on behalf of the residents of Stonebridge Close, Marlborough regarding ARK wanting to make an access from our Close into Stonebridge Meadow.

There are 33 homes here, and out of them the residents living in 29 have signed the petition against the plan... Dated Monday 20 January 2020”

Consideration of this matter was the next item on the agenda.

454/19 STONEBRIDGE MEADOW

Members noted the Town Clerk’s report and considered three matters relating to the Meadow.

Consultation – Access into Stonebridge Meadow from Stonebridge Close

A consultation ran during December 2019 and January 2020, led by the Town Council and ARK and administered by the Assistant Town Clerk. There were 13 written responses and

of these there was no appetite for the proposal, all raising objections to an access being created. A petition reiterated this view. Representations against the proposal had also been made at Full Town Council on 20 January and at a public meeting about Stonebridge Meadow's Management Plan on 22 January.

- **Cllr. Cooper** opened the discussion by saying that the responses to the consultation together with the petition and questions at the beginning of the meeting showed clearly that people did not support this proposed access. Having consulted, the Town Council and ARK had a duty to listen to the responses.
- **The Town Mayor**, having heard from a representative of MTFC that access was always available, was not sure there was any compelling reason for a second access
- **Cllr. Castle** stated it was essential to have access in order to keep the meadow in a splendid condition. In the past, ARK had raised the question about whether access via MTFC was guaranteed (there was a barrier to the car park) and also whether that access would remain in perpetuity. For this reason, the request for a second access had been legitimate and it had been courteous to consult with neighbours of the meadow on the question. They had responded and their replies should be noted. Cllr. Castle understood that the **Town Clerk** had requested copies of documents from MTFC and this might help resolve the matter.
- **Cllr. Ross** believed there had never been an access point at this position and felt it was important to reconsider the proposal considering the feedback received.

The **Chairman** reminded everyone that, at this stage, the only plan had been to engage with residents via a consultation about the proposal – there were no set plans to press forward.

During a suspension of Standing Orders further points were raised:

Cllr. Dobson was encouraged to hear the comments from Members and was sure they would recognise that the proposal had generated anger and concern: he sympathised with these concerns. It had been unfortunate that at the Stonebridge Management Committee (SMC) meeting of 11 December 2019 the Committee took a decision to change the wording of the draft consultation letter from 'create access' to 're-open access' as, in living memory, there was no evidence of a prior access at this point; he had found no documentary evidence in his Town and District Council archives; there was no indication of a public right of way on the Wiltshire Council Rights of Way map and nothing in the deeds of residents living adjacent to the proposed access point. He referred to the SMC Minutes from September 2012 which stated the gates to MRFC was the preferred access point and that ARK had been provided with the combination to the lock. The request appeared to have first been raised in December 2018, and he wondered whether there had been a breakdown in relations between ARK and MTFC to instigate this. He further speculated on what might develop in future if such an access were to be created – vehicles, perhaps a visitor centre, increased parking and more, all of which would be to the detriment of the residents of Stonebridge Close. If the proposal went any further, he would support a requirement for a formal planning application process.

Charlotte Hitchmough (Director, ARK) confirmed that there was currently a formal right of access across MTFC land although there were times when the barriers prevented vehicle access. There was no desire to cause distress especially as the residents of Stonebridge Close were good neighbours. She had no strong feelings about where the access point was only that there would always be an access point available. The only requirement was that ARK and/or the Town Council could access the meadow with vehicles for maintenance only: no additional general pedestrian access had been proposed.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their contributions. It appeared that the issue now was whether documents held by MTFC would confirm a right of access. He proposed that any further decision was deferred until the documents had been received by the Town Council.

RESOLVED: (i) to defer a decision until documents had been received from Marlborough Town Football Club confirming a right of access into Stonebridge Meadow

Annual Review of the Stonebridge Meadow Management Plan

Following a public meeting about progress of the Management Plan on 22 January 2020, Members considered two amendments to the Plan:

- To include a proposed access via Stonebridge Close
- To include a proposed footbridge to join the Meadow to the boardwalk

Cllr. Ross wholeheartedly endorsed the proposed bridge which would remove the current cul de sac at the end of the boardwalk, recommending that supporting this project should be a priority for the Town Council, with possible financial assistance.

RESOLVED: (ii) that one amendment to the Management Plan was approved (a new footbridge over the Kennet)

Committee Minutes

Members noted the minutes of the meeting held 11 December 2019.

455/19

TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk's report was noted with no questions arising.

456/19

GROUND MANAGER'S REPORT

The Ground Manager's report was noted. **Cllr. Cooper** congratulated the team on the good order of the Cemetery, as well as the improved new pedestrian access.

Several members of the public left the meeting

457/19

MARLBOROUGH COMMON

Members considered suggestions raised by **Mr Richard Pitts** during public question time at Full Town Council on 20 January 2020 about the management and future maintenance of The Common.

The Grounds Manager confirmed that there had been no major change to the general maintenance routine in the last 8 years with some exceptions such as creating a mown area for the Civil War Re-enactment in July 2019. He clarified that the last mow had been in November, not 12 December. He was flexible about management of The Common and open to suggestions as long as they complied with Council policy.

Cllr. Ross felt there was a general consensus among all interested parties in the aim of not disturbing wildlife.

During a suspension of Standing Orders **Mr Pitts** expanded on his suggestions about expert advisers such as **Transition Marlborough, ARK** and **St John's Academy** (a teacher runs a climate change group at the school) who could contribute to decisions about how to manage areas for wildlife conservation. He also suggested that wild walk areas could be publicised to raise awareness with the wider community.

Cllr. Dobson had been disappointed that Common Users Group had been scaled back by the Town Council just to include invited users such as the Model Flying Club, Rugby Club

etc. While recognising the requests from environmental groups, he cautioned that they didn't necessarily reflect everyone's views – if the Town Council was to take advice from third parties, it should also include other members of the public who might not share the same views.

Sandra Rogers urged that the St John's climate change group be included so that the students could have some positive involvement with the town: we were all facing a climate emergency.

Margaret Rose asked whether Marlborough Town Rugby Football Club could be asked to tidy the area behind the clubhouse.

Members then discussed:

- agreement that the Town Council should encourage and develop green practices
- to be mindful that the Common was also a major sporting venue used by various groups
- there was enough space for sports, events and wild areas which could comfortably co-exist
- as confirmed by the **Town Clerk**, that in line with other local councils, Marlborough Town Council was considering a policy on climate change (the planting of more trees was already included in its Action Plan - project AS3). Any new policy was likely to incorporate the management of all open spaces, not just The Common

RESOLVED: to continue the current mowing regime on the Common as previously agreed (Min 351/19) and to seek best practice environmental advice by consulting with relevant local experts

458/19

COOPERS MEADOW

Members noted a report by the Grounds Manager about a recent visit by the Environment Agency to Coopers Meadow and considered recommendations about incorporating feedback and advice from this visit into the Coopers Meadow Management Plan.

Maintenance of the meadow and the leat had been a joint effort between the Town Council and ARK. The Management Plan was first drawn up in 2014-15. It was agreed that a one-off working party should review and recommend updates to the plan.

RESOLVED: that, working with the **Grounds Manager, Cllrs. Cooper and Heath** were nominated to review the Coopers Meadow Management Plan

459/19

PRIORY GARDENS

Mrs Val Compton had asked a question at Full Town Council on 20 January 2020 about future projects to involve young people in creating areas to support more biodiversity in Priory Gardens. Discussion points included:

- No changes should be made to the central lawn area, which was well used by families during fine weather as well as being an events venue
- That any changes should not contravene the legally binding stipulations about the general layout of the garden in the Deed of Gift dated 6 July 1971
- The possible addition of bird and bat boxes and bug hotels/habitat piles
- Support for involving young people to create a sense of pride and ownership and whether all schools should be invited
- That the gardens were for everyone to use so all should have the opportunity to have a say in any proposed changes

- Whether there was much scope beneath the canopy of trees. There were already many wildflowers that appeared in Spring but, once the canopy grew heavy in summer, it might be difficult for other plants to grow successfully
- Whether small areas (corners, the riverbank, a swathe of wildflowers along the boundary wall) could be altered for wildlife without affecting the formal layout
- Whether the sensory area created originally for partially sighted people should be re-instated.

RESOLVED: to contact St John's Academy to discuss the possible involvement of young people in identifying areas where more biodiversity could be encouraged at Priory Gardens

Several members of the public left the meeting

460/19

CEMETERIES

RESOLVED: (i) that recent Grants of Exclusive Rights of Burial were noted

RESOLVED: (ii) that recent approved inscriptions and memorials were noted

461/19

SKATEPARK LIGHTING

Members noted an update report by the Assistant Town Clerk. Next steps would include an acoustic survey prior to a public consultation exercise.

Some Members expressed reservations about the scheme itself and the length of time it was taking to complete but, would await the survey results and details of the public consultation event.

462/19

MARLBOROUGH IN BLOOM (MiB)

Members noted an update report from the Assistant Town Clerk about this year's entries into both the South West in Bloom and the national Britain in Bloom competitions. A press release had been issued about the town's entry into the national competition and a new MiB Committee appeared to be forming. As the Town Council was taking the lead in the competition entries, Members were invited to step forward to join an In Bloom Working Group.

RESOLVED: that **Cllrs. Wilson** and **Hillier** were nominated to the In Bloom Working Group, and that the Terms of Reference were re-adopted

463/19

GREAT BRITISH SPRING CLEAN 2020

Members noted that the Town Council would again be arranging several events on different days and at varying times of day to coincide with the Great British Spring Clean, 20 March-13 April 2020.

The **Town Mayor** had attended the most recent Tidy Town day and had been disappointed at the low attendance.

464/19

MARLBOROUGH BOWLS CLUB

Members considered requests from Marlborough Bowls Club about car park re-surfacing and banner advertising.

Car Park Surface

- The Bowls Club was owned by the Town Council and a renewal lease/licence was currently being discussed via the Property Committee
- The car park was surfaced in 2016, funded by S106 monies
- Over time, the shingle surface had been dispersed
- It was noted that there were deep single piles at the margins of the car park which could potentially be moved and spread evenly across the car park area

- Whether larger stones would help prevent surface stone dispersal
- The extent of work and costs had not yet been investigated – the price of 4-5 tonnes of shingle would be obtained by the Grounds Manager

RESOLVED: (i) to wait until the wet weather had passed, then rake the existing shingle over the car park. At that point a further review, including costings, should be considered

Banner Advertising

A request had been received to place a 6'x3' banner on the railings at the Salisbury Road entrance to the Recreation Ground to recruit new members and spread awareness about the Bowls Club activities. Members discussed:

- Banners may be subject to advertising consent
- That the Town Council was keen to support the Bowls Club
- Whether, over time, banner ties would come loose and look untidy and that an alternative, rigid board might be more suitable

RESOLVED: (ii) that the Town Council agreed to the placing of a rigid advertising board on the Recreation Ground railings subject to any requirement for advertising consent from the Local Planning Authority

465/19

ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

Members noted the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Allotment Association.

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm

Signed: Date:
Chairman