

There were no announcements.

294/20

MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held 1 September 2020 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman

295/20

GROUNDS MANAGER'S REPORT

Members noted the Grounds Manager's report.

296/20

PROPOSAL FOR A THIRD PITCH AT MARLBOROUGH COMMON

Members noted a report by the Grounds Manager and considered a request from Marlborough Rugby Football Club for permission for a third pitch at Marlborough Common. *(Several plans were displayed during the discussion showing potential locations for the third pitch including one provided by MRFC and an alternative suggestion from the Town Council).*

The Chairman introduced the request reminding Members:

- That the Common was well used by several groups, e.g. the Model Flying Club (since the 1970s), Marlborough Youth Football Club (MYFC), Marlborough Tennis Club and Marlborough Golf Club
- That the Common was well used for exercise and recreation by residents and this use had increased during the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic
- That areas were set aside for wildlife and wildflowers
- That several letters and emails had been received objecting to the request

During multiple suspensions of Standing Orders representatives of MRFC clarified the request, answered questions and responded to points raised in public question time or previously circulated as well as other interest groups contributing to the debate:

Marlborough Rugby Football Club:

- A plan had been provided by MRFC showing two possible locations
- That the Grounds Manager's proposed location in line with existing pitches and adjacent to Frees Avenue was rough ground and would incur a cost of around £35,000 to prepare it for level playing and that cost was MRFC's main driver for the proposed location in the middle of The Common
- The area was more likely to be used as a training area for youth rather than senior players – between MRFC and MYFC there were approximately 700 children looking to play sport at weekends and use the new pitch
- Preparation of the site, at MRFC's cost, would include the addition of around 100mm/4" of topsoil which would need levelling and seeding (no excavation)
- MRFC did not have permanent use of Marlborough College rugby pitches
- The area would still be green grass and people could still walk on it – the area preferred by MRFC was not bisected by any mown paths and had ragwort present
- MRFC could consider improving biodiversity by planting a nectar mix nearby
- That the Common was not a conservation area
- That there was no proposal to add fencing
- Around 20% of the population was under 20 and the town was poorly served for playing space for youth football and rugby players

- Proposed use of the pitch was for Saturday and Sunday mornings only (although people played later in the day than usual under COVID-19 restrictions but once these eased the club would revert to mornings only)
- Senior players used existing pitches at other times of the day/week
- Attic space at the clubhouse was being finalised to create space for more toilets, shower and changing room
- Most young players arrived dressed to play and went home to shower
- The car park adjacent to the clubhouse was available to the whole community

Marlborough Model Flying Club:

- Doubt about whether the area would be used as proposed – an example given was the fencing which was originally agreed to be removed between matches had been permanently sited on the Common during the whole rugby season
- High posts were difficult for model aircraft to negotiate – the area would become unusable to the club
- Most take offs and landings took place right over the area proposed by MRFC
- Civil Aviation Authority safety rules forbade members from flying above groups so would not be able to fly over the proposed pitch when in use
- The loss of an area for emergency landings
- There were already limited options for flying, particularly during winter and weekends and additional sports pitches would further reduce this – an example given was that rugby games often went into the afternoon so members' experienced delayed and/or limited available flying time
- The club deliberately limits its membership to around 40 people in consideration of residents and other users of The Common (noise etc)
- Having used the Common for decades, there was already a feeling of being squeezed out of The Common
- An appeal to set a time limit on the use of the pitch at weekends
- There were already 2 rugby pitches plus a training area near the clubhouse but only one flying site
- Whether MRFC could provide ancillary facilities (parking, toilets, changing rooms) for additional users
- When team sport took over the majority of Common, where would walkers go?
- Whether MRFC would reconsider the alternative location provided by the Town Council as a compromise

Marlborough parkrun:

- That MRFC's proposal shown in blue appeared to cross the paths used by parkrun participants at one corner
- Whether people would still be able to run between 9-10am
- That diverting parkrun closer to the driving range at the Golf Course would create a risk of runners being hit by golf balls
- That the Grounds Manager's proposed site would mean cutting a corner for the parkrun route, and whether that would then be too close to the 16th hole of the golf course

Members of the public and Transition Marlborough:

- Support for public consultation
- The proposal would take away the nature of Marlborough Common by setting aside a section for nothing but sport, and indication that it was unlikely to continue to be used by all
- Agreement that exercise for young people was important
- Whether the planting of a pollen corridor was a good mitigation to offset the loss of an area of unmown grass and wild plants
- Whether positioning a third pitch in the middle of the Common would change the current area from one rich in long grass, wildflowers and wildlife to a green desert
- Whether the Grounds Manager's proposal for a pitch adjacent to Frees avenue would have less impact on wildlife and biodiversity

Councillors:

- The Marlborough Area Neighbourhood Plan had identified the need for additional sports pitches as a priority area for the town to meet community needs – there were now active boys and girls teams and membership of both clubs was growing
- Whether, if consulted, there was likely to be more support for the proposal than objection
- That a very large area was already set aside for golf
- Whether objections were due to negative attitudes towards MRFC
- Whether a time limit could be placed on use of the third pitch
- That the Flying Club must have a guaranteed right to fly – agreement was urged between both clubs
- Whether the parkrun route would be affected
- Whether MRFC could be asked to provide more detailed costings against the Grounds Manager's proposed location as it would be better for other users of the Common, especially members of the Flying Club and parkrun

RESOLVED: that the Town Council agrees to the request for a third pitch subject to (i) it being positioned as marked in blue on the MRFC plan and above the existing pitches, (ii) that guaranteed playing hours are agreed to the satisfaction of Marlborough Model Flying Club and that (iii) no permanent posts shall be sited at the pitch when not in use

297/20

MARLBOROUGH COMMON

Members noted a report by the Town Clerk and considered requests from Marlborough Rugby Football Club (MRFC) for an awning and screening at its clubhouse as well as concerns raised by a resident about encroachment onto The Common.

RESOLVED: (i) that permission to erect container screening to match/integrate with the fencing currently in place and a gate is granted

RESOLVED: (ii) that permission is granted to erect a retractable awning above the rear entrance to the Clubhouse, subject to relevant planning permissions

Some members of the public left the meeting

RESOLVED: that no action should be taken about a possible encroachment onto The Common as reported by a resident

298/20

CEMETERIES

RESOLVED: (i) that recent Grants of Exclusive Rights of Burial be noted and that former Mayor, Leonard Bulley was among them

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

The **Town Mayor** had recently visited the Cemetery and thanked the **Grounds Manager** and his team for the immaculate presentation.

The Town Council had been approached by residents to ask if the council would consider buying back previously purchased graves. Due to a change in their circumstances, they no longer required these plots. The plots would be bought back at the price of the original purchase.

RESOLVED: (iii) that the Town Council agrees to purchase back grave spaces no longer required at the original purchase price

Members noted that temporary signage appeared to be improving availability of space at the Cemetery car park and considered options for permanent signage to clearly denote Marlborough Cemetery and its car park.

RESOLVED: (iv) to seek designs and costs for signage similar to that at North Watford Cemetery (with a map and publicising the Victorian Cemetery) for approval at a future meeting

RESOLVED: (v) that permission for a new memorial bench is granted

299/20

STONEBRIDGE MEADOW

Members noted the minutes of the Stonebridge Meadow Management Committee held 16 September 2020.

Some members of the public left the meeting

300/20

TOWN MILL MACHINERY

Members noted a report by the Town Clerk and considered a temporary storage solution for the Town Mill machinery.

RESOLVED: to thank Mr and Mrs Fernley, owners of the Ropeworks, for the safekeeping of the Town Mill machinery over the last few years and that the Town Council agrees that it is transported to its new temporary home as generously offered by Mr Gibson

301/20

CHURCHILL COURT

Members noted a report by the Town Clerk and considered ongoing works to trees at Churchill Court. In addition to those already submitted, letters had been received very recently from two residents. One had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting, the second was read out by the Town Clerk. Discussion points included:

- That one tree had recently been reduced and disappointment that some residents had objected to the work to only that tree when more tree works were required
- One common concern was that trees were blocking light into residents' apartments
- In the past the Grounds Team had cut back overhanging branches as a goodwill gesture but, could only undertake certain works. Tree surgeons would be required for other types of work and there was a question of who should pay for this – the tree budget for the entire town was £3,000. There needed to be a clear policy on what tree works the Council would take responsibility for at Churchill Court
- That the Town Council had previously agreed to the recommendation of its health and safety advisers to erect signage – warning signage had since been erected
- The riverbank was about 8-10 feet from the ground floor flats, with a 4' drop to the river – a liability that rested with the Town Council
- Fencing costs had already been identified (around £3,500), but estimates would need to be updated
- Whether, if the proposed fence was to be erected, the Town Council should then cut back any overhanging trees
- That a fence could be of post and rail type in order to allow residents a continued view of the river
- That the owners of Churchill Court had no interest in taking over the ownership of the riverbank and did not appear willing to meet the costs of tree works which would benefit their residents
- Some sympathy with residents' concerns as maintenance costs would likely be passed on to the residents
- Where there had been a risk of damage to the building, the Town Council had arranged for trees to be cut back in the past
- Whether there was any obligation for the Town Council to cut back trees to provide light
- The trees were inspected by an arboriculturist in line with the Town Council's tree inspection and maintenance schedule
- Although approaches had been unsuccessful in the past, whether to try once more to arrange a meeting with the owners of Churchill Court
- Whether to delay any other decisions on the trees until a meeting had taken place with the owners

RESOLVED: to approach the owners of Churchill Court to arrange a meeting to discuss all issues and defer any other decisions pending the outcome of this meeting

Some members of the public left the meeting

Members noted a report by the Town Clerk and considered budget requirements as well as cemetery, open spaces and pitch fees for 2021/22. The discussion included:

- Officers had provided a forecast budget for consideration and that it was now for the committee to decide priority expenditure
- That the forecast represented a significant increase on the current year's agreed budget
- Due to the implications of COVID-19, Chairs of Committees were separately looking at the overall budget
- A final decision on the 2021/22 budget and precept requirement would be deferred until January 2021
- One reduction of the predicted budget requirement would be funding a contribution to the new bridge at Stonebridge Meadow from unallocated CIL monies
- Whether large items such as extra equipment in anticipation of services to be devolved from Wiltshire Council could be pushed back to 2022/23
- Whether the costs of vehicle and machinery breakdowns and maintenance would be greater than the purchase of new equipment

RESOLVED: (i) to defer a decision until the outcome of the Committee Chairs meeting was known

RESOLVED: (ii) that charges for 2021/22 for Open Spaces hire and Cemeteries be increased by 2%

303/20

MARLBOROUGH IN BLOOM (MiB)

RHS certificates had been received, including one for Cooper's Meadow – **Councillor Hillier** congratulated the Grounds Manager and his team.

304/20

ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION

Members noted the most recent minutes of the Allotment Association.

305/20

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: that under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, members of 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 commercially confidential nature of the business to be transacted

306/20

LAND AT TIN PIT

Members considered a request for re-levelling part of the site.

RESOLVED: that the Town Council does not agree to the request to off load topsoil from the development at Rabley Wood onto Town Council-owned land at Tin Pit.

307/20

A BAPTISM

Members noted a report by the Town Clerk and considered a request to hold a religious ceremony on Town Council-owned land. Since the agenda had been issued, this request had been withdrawn.

The meeting closed at 10.03 pm

Signed: Date:
Chairman

DRAFT