

Marlborough Town Council

Grounds Managers Report June 2020

General

This spring has been somewhat of a challenge

Due to the Corona Virus from the 23rd of March we have been running a reduced service.

The service level was reduced to safeguard our staff against the spread of the virus following advice from the government

Workload

The spring is usually one of our busier seasons

With the grass growing faster than we can cut it as well as the weeds.

I took the decision even with the limited staff that we had available to try and make sure that we cut as many of our open spaces as possible. We usually work on a two-weekly rota for the grass cutting this had to be stretched a little bit to give us time to get round as many of our areas.

We have also been very busy dealing with the burials as they have come in we have had nine burials and one ashes internment

Bedding displays

I am please to report that we do have some bedding plants

When we first went into lock down I was contacted by the manager of the nursery where we get our plants from saying that they were unable to supply the plants that we had ordered back in December due to a lot of nursery staff had to shield themselves . luckily the manager contacted me a couple of days later explaining that it was a group email that had been sent to all of there customers but they had started to put together our order although not all of the plants we wanted were available

I quickly looked at our order and after speaking to the nursery manager was able to get some plants although slightly different to those that had originally been ordered

The bedding displays are all planted now and are doing well.

The planters have been fed with granular slow release fertilizer that should last for a few months.

We are watering the planters at least twice a week and one a month they are liquid fed with miracle grow Weeding and dead heading of the planter is weekly

I am currently working on the winter bedding requirements.

The order for winter bedding will be placed in the next couple of weeks

Play

When we went into lockdown the government advise was to close all play areas .

those play areas tat are enclosed behind fences have been closed and locked up the other play areas that we have are in open spaces which made it almost impossible to secure so notices where placed on each individual piece of equipment saying that the play area was closed and the no maintenance or inspections would be carried out whilst the play equipment is closed .

during the lock down period I must have replaced more that thirty notices as people pulled the off the play areas will remain closed until the government advice changes

Machinery:

The lease on the Husqvarna P524 is coming to its end I have asked our supplier for the cost of a replacement machine to lease as there is a budget line for that machine I am just waiting for them to get back to me.

Site Specific

Salisbury Road Recreation Ground.

Regular grass cuts

Regular bin checks and emptying

St Mary's Church

Regular grass cuts

Regular bin checks and emptying

The Green

Regular grass cuts

Regular bin checks and emptying

The lime trees close to the traffic lights have been trimmed back a couple of times as the branches cover the traffic light signals

War Memorials

Regular maintenance visits to keep the grass strimmed and the weeds under control

Thames water have had one of there contractors carrying out some leakage repairs over the last month there are now two smaller isolation valves in the grass area close to memorial on the Salisbury road junction

The Cemetery

We have had a busy time dealing with the burials

We have had a good start to the season in the cemetery with the grass cut and strimming done

Topping up of sunken graves as and when they need doing

Old Cemetery

Regular grass cuts

Control of invasive weeds is still on going with regular pesticide spraying to control the nettles docks and brambles.

The Priory

The priory is closed to members of the public

Regular maintenance visits to cut the grass and check the litter bins

The picnic bench near the river has been vandalised with one of the benches being broken off.

I have spoke to a local company for the cost to repair the bench and I am waiting for them to get back to me.

One of the memorial trees that was planted over ten years ago has died.

It has struggled through the last couple of hot dry summers and unfortunately did not re shoot this year.

Coopers Meadow

Regular grass cuts

Regular bin checks and emptying

At the back of the toilet block there is an Ash tree that is suffering from ash dieback.

I have arranged for the tree surgeon to take a look at the tree this week and to get a price to remove it

The Common

The common is being well used by small groups of people at a social distance

Regular grass cuts

Regular bin checks and emptying

There is some ragwort growing on the common which I have started to control by hand digging it out .

Manton - Jubilee field

Regular grass cuts

Regular bin checks and emptying

The company that are going to be installing the new play equipment later this year have been to the site and dug a few test holes to check on soil conditions and to get the exact location of the pipe line that runs under the play area the test holes have all been re filled

Wye House Gardens

Regular grass cuts

Regular bin checks and emptying

Elcot Rec

Regular maintenance visits for mowing and emptying the bins

Stonebridge Meadow

The meadow has only been cut once so far this year the ground took a long time to dry out after the wet winter

We had some travellers staying on the Marlborough football club site for a few days after they had moved off they left a considerable mess litter toilet roll and faeces which has been cleared away .

Since the travellers left the football club site the vehicular access gate has been closed and locked which does make it difficult at times for us to gain access especially for the tractor.

Stonebridge Meadow

Summary – Members are asked to note the main points of the Stonebridge Meadow Management Committee held remotely on 17 June 2020 and to consider any actions to take forward including issues around access to Stonebridge Meadow

1. Background

Due to restrictions surrounding the Coronavirus pandemic, the Stonebridge Meadow Management Committee (SMC) was not able to meet for its scheduled meeting in March and met for the first time via Zoom on Wednesday, 17 March. The minutes are not yet available for this.

At the last A&OS meeting, resolutions were as follows:

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

The above decision revolved around concerns raised by residents (via a petition) about the possibility of an access into the meadow via Stonebridge Close. Documents were provided by Marlborough Town Football Club confirming access rights and these were discussed at the SMC meeting on 17 June. The Chairman will give a verbal update at the meeting about this.

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

2. Stonebridge Meadow Meeting – 17 June: Main Points of Discussion

In the absence of formal minutes, the Chairman, Cllr Don Heath, will give updates on the following:

- Access to Stonebridge Meadow via land owned by Marlborough Town Football Club (MTFC) and management of existing trees on border with Stonebridge Close
- New bridge project
- Cattle grazing in the meadow
- Replacement of gate between MTFC land and the meadow
- Additional bench in the amenity area
- Tree planting as part of a wider Town Council initiative
- Black poplars

3. Financial Implications

The budget for 2020/21 for Stonebridge Meadow is £1,000.

Town Clerk's Recommendations

The Town Clerk recommends that Members consider any actions that need to be taken following the most recent SMC meeting.

Town Clerk

18 June 2020

Marlborough Common

Summary – This report asks Members to consider requests from Marlborough Rugby Football Club (MRFC) for permission for an additional storage container at the Clubhouse and for a meeting to discuss playing space.

1. Background

Under the terms of our lease with MRFC, permission needs to be sought from the Town Council before changes are made to the area covered by that lease. We have received a request to locate a second small ISO container behind the clubhouse. (This is a shipping container and ideal for storage). The one already there is used for storing post protectors, flags, balls, bibs, etc. There is insufficient space in the clubhouse to store these items and as membership grows, more storage space is needed.

MRFC has offered to make reasonable efforts to camouflage both containers by

- i) painting them both green
- and
- ii) providing visual screening so they are not visible to the public.

It is not clear if planning consent is needed for this and MRFC are already making enquiries about it.

2. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications for the Town Council.

3. COVID-19

MRFC is sending out monthly newsletters during the pandemic to keep up community engagement. There is a fear that rugby will be one of the last sports to return to normal due to the contact nature of the game which carries a danger that players may leave for other sports. The most recent newsletter is attached.

4. Request for a Meeting

Committee members would welcome a meeting with representatives of the A&OS Committee and others to discuss playing space.

Town Clerk's Recommendations

The Town Clerk recommends that

- i) Members consider whether to agree to a second ISO container behind the clubhouse and
- ii) Nominate representatives and others to meet with MRFC committee members to discuss playing space

Town Clerk

17 June 2020

Marlborough Cemetery

Summary – Members are asked to consider improved signage at the car park and entrance to Marlborough Cemetery

1. Background

The area used for car parking at the entrance to the cemetery is for mourners and those visiting or tending graves at the cemetery. It would be sensible to have professional signs indicating that this is the case. It is not clear if any form of planning permission will be needed for this or if signs can be erected under permitted development rights.



Members may like to consider how many signs there should be and the wording to be included.

The Grounds Team is planning to re-paint the posts, installed to guard against parking on the edge of the grass verge.

2. Financial Implications

No costings have yet been sought for signage. It will be a charge to the cemetery maintenance budget (202/4038).

Town Clerk's Recommendation

The Town Clerk recommends that Members agree that after checking on planning requirements, signage is erected, and it is delegated to the Town Clerk to follow this through.

Town Clerk

17 June 2020

Climate Change

Summary - To note a report by the Town Clerk and consider whether to recommend that Marlborough Town Council should declare a climate emergency.

1. Background

At the A&OS meeting of 3 February 2020, a resident asked for the Town Council's policy on climate change. Here is the relevant extract from the minutes:

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.

2. What is Climate Change

The United Nations International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has amassed evidence over decades to link human activity with global temperature rises. The greenhouse effect is a natural process warming the Earth's surface. When the Sun's energy reaches the Earth's atmosphere, some is absorbed by greenhouse gases - water vapour, carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane, nitrous oxide, ozone and artificial chemicals such as chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). The absorbed energy warms the atmosphere and the Earth's surface, allowing life to exist.

Human activities – particularly burning fossil fuels (coal, oil and natural gas), agriculture and land clearing – are enhancing concentrations of greenhouse gases so further warming the Earth, increasing temperatures.

3. Why is there a Climate Emergency?

The IPCC published a report in October 2018 warning that there was less than 12 years to act to avoid the severe impacts of climate change from a 2°C rise in global temperatures compared to a 1.5°C rise. There is urgent new evidence from the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) - the 20 warmest years on record all fall in the last 22 years. It forecasts temperature rises between 3-5C by the end of this century. The effects would be devastating with rising sea levels, extreme weather, coastal flooding, worsening storms, heatwaves, droughts, desertification, species loss and crop failure. Some regions could see deaths due to heat stress, poverty, famine, mass migration, unrest and conflict.

The IPCC suggests that limiting the rise to 1.5°C is possible with ambitious global action which includes working at a local level

4. How has central government and local government reacted?

The UK government declared a 'climate emergency' in May 2019. Under an amendment to the Climate Change Act 2008 in June 2019, it also made a commitment to net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Wiltshire Council, formally acknowledged the climate emergency in February 2019, seeking to make the county carbon neutral by 2030. Actions include investments of £17.2m for energy efficient buildings and highway LED lighting, a corporate electricity contract with a green tariff, electric buses, solar projects and a climate change team for 2020/21. An overview of Wiltshire Council's commitment is at: <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/green-economy-climate-emergency> (

Many forward-thinking town councils across the country have declared a Climate Emergency. Town councils moving on this are:

Bradford on Avon Town Council has declared a Climate Emergency. Information at: <https://bradfordonavontowncouncil.gov.uk/climate-emergency-info/#:~:text=In%20March%202019%2C%20Bradford%20on,Council%20declared%20a%20Climate%20Emergency.&text=As%20a%20council%20who%20have,the%20Climate%20Emergency%20being%20declared.>

Trowbridge Town Council has declared a Climate Emergency too. Information at: <https://www.trowbridge.gov.uk/2020/01/27/climate-change-and-you/>

Frome Town Council is seen to be leading the way: More information is at: <https://www.frometowncouncil.gov.uk/your-community/resilience/climate-emergency/>
But the one mentioned in dispatches is Stroud Town Council at: <https://www.stroudtown.gov.uk/climate-emergency.html>

5. Should Marlborough Town Council declare a Climate Emergency?

There are local groups looking to address climate breakdown (e.g. Transition Marlborough) and a strong local feeling about the issue - students from St John's Academy protested on the Town Hall steps during the global school strike for climate on 15 March 2019 and local Extinction Rebellion (XR) supporters held up High Street traffic as they marched through as part of the XR 'International Action' campaign.

Marlborough Town Council has been asked if it will join up various organisation to address the issue and this could be through a Climate Emergency Declaration in line with other town councils. A declaration is in itself not enough and it would need to be backed up with an Action Plan.

6. Financial Implications

There is no budget set aside specifically for Climate Change actions, but having a Climate Emergency Declaration in place might open up access to various funding streams. It may also need a dedicated staff resource.

Town Clerk's Recommendation

The Town Clerk recommends that Members consider if it is now time to properly look at taking on a commitment to the climate breakdown and how the Town Council might take it forward possibly through a Climate Emergency Declaration and supporting Action Plan.

Town Clerk

17 June 2020

Memorial Benches

Summary – This report asks Members to consider requests for memorial benches on Town Council-owned land

1. Background

From time to time, the Town Council receives requests for permission to install memorial benches in its open spaces. We have received 2 such requests since the last A&OS meeting in February:

- i) **Elcot Lane Village Green** – Family and neighbours of Owen Martin deceased (a well-known local figure who helped to run the old open air swimming pool in Ropewalk and also a member of the Marlborough Rugby Football Club (MRFC), helping with mini rugby when MRFC was based at the Elcot Lane site) have asked for permission to put a memorial bench on the Village Green at Elcot Lane.

There are no byelaws associated with the Village Green (it was only relatively recently granted Village Green status). As a comparison, there are a number of benches on The Green in the centre of town.

- ii) **High Street** – The wife of Mr Peter Offer deceased has asked if a memorial bench could be placed in the High Street. It's clear that the town centre is in real need of more benches but this is public highway and permissions need to be sought from WC Highways as well as businesses and shops in the direct vicinity (most of these own a proportion of the pavement in front of their premises). The Assistant Town Clerk has written to Mrs Offer explaining the difficulties of installing benches in the High Street and has suggested that she may like to consider locations on other Town Council-owned property which she is happy to do.

Members may like to consider offering alternative sites on Town Council-owned land or work with Highways to identify a suitable location in the High Street. (This may not be a quick turnaround)

2. Financial Implications

There should be no financial implications for the Town Council aside from staff resource to install benches on Town Council-owned land.

3. Points to Note

- In recent years, benches have been of a uniform type and sourced through the Town Council except for one recently installed at the Salisbury Road Recreation Ground in memory of a local young person.
- The Grounds Manager will have suggestions for possible locations

Town Clerk's Recommendation

The Town Clerk recommends that Members:

- i) agree that a bench can be erected at the Elcot Lane Village Green
- ii) suggest alternative locations for a bench dedicated Mr P Offer deceased
- iii) that follow-up, identification of exact locations within sites and installation are delegated to the Town Clerk working with the Grounds Manager.

Town Clerk

17 June 2020

Bequest from the Free Family

Summary – Members are asked to consider a request from the Free family on expenditure relating to a bequest

1. Background

Members will be aware that the Free family played a significant part in the recent history of the town (Thomas Free (whose portrait sits above the stairs in the Town Hall) and his son, Eric Free, were both Mayor multiple times). The tree lined Frees Avenue is named in their honour and the Horse Chestnut trees were donated by the family whose members often return to Marlborough and in 2013 visited for a tour of the Town Hall with the then Mayor, Councillor Guy Loosmore.

2. Bequest

A member of the family, Martin Crook, has left £1,500 to the Town Council in his will for a memorial bench close to Frees Avenue and towards replenishing trees there. The money has been transferred to Marlborough Town Council.

3. Points to Note

The Town Clerk has written to the family thanking them for the bequest and letting them know that this will be discussed by the A&OS Committee.

Town Clerk's Recommendations

The Town Clerk recommends that Members consider:

- i) That a letter is sent from the Mayor thanking the family for the bequest from Martin Crook to the Town Council
- ii) Identifying a location for the bench and liaising with the family about a suitable plaque and inviting family members for a small 'unveiling' event
- iii) How the balance of funds could fund new trees for Frees Avenue.

Town Clerk

17 June 2020