

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments

Advisory Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



Monday, 24th May, 2021 at 6.00 pm

To members of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee - M Jones, J Aitman, L Ashbourne, T Ashby, O Collins, L Duncan, R Smith and V Gwatkin (and all other Town Councillors for information).

You are hereby summonsed to the above meeting to be held in the **Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom** for the transaction of the business stated in the agenda below.

Admission to Meetings

All Council meetings are open to the public and press unless otherwise stated.

As an Advisory Committee of the Council this meeting will take place virtually via Zoom. All decisions of this meeting will be recommendations to Full Council.

Zoom login details of this meeting will be published on the Council's website prior to the meeting.

Recording of Meetings

Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 the council's public meetings may be recorded, which includes filming, audio-recording as well as photography.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Town Clerk or Democratic Services Officer know before the start of the meeting.

Agenda

1. Apologies for Absence

To consider apologies and reasons for absence.

Committee Members who are unable to attend the meeting should notify the Democratic & Legal Services Officer, Simon Wright (democracy@witney-tc.gov.uk) **prior to the meeting**, stating the reason for absence.

***Standing Order 30(a)(v)** permits the appointment of substitute Councillors to a Committee whose role is to replace ordinary Councillors at a meeting of a Committee if ordinary Councillors of the Committee have confirmed to the Proper Officer **before** the meeting that they are unable to attend.*

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are reminded to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests in any of the items under consideration at this meeting in accordance with the Town Council's code of conduct.

3. Election of Vice Chair

To elect the Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2021/2022 municipal year.

4. Minutes (Pages 3 - 8)

a) To receive and consider the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Minutes held on 8 March 2021.

b) Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda (Questions on the progress of any item).

5. **Public Participation**

The meeting will adjourn for this item.

Members of the public may speak for a maximum of **five minutes** each during the period of public participation, in line with Standing Order 42. Matters raised shall relate to the following items on the agenda.

6. **Public Halls Update**

To receive a verbal update on the Public Halls from the Deputy Town Clerk.

7. **Cemeteries Update** (Pages 9 - 16)

To receive the report of the Compliance, External Contracts & Cemeteries Officer.

8. **Allotments Update** (Pages 17 - 22)

To receive the report of the Operations & Estates Advisor.



Town Clerk

**HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 8 March 2021

At 6.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom

Present:

Councillor M Jones (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	L Duncan
	L Ashbourne	V Gwatkin
	T Ashby	J King
	O Collins	
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	John Hickman	Operations & Estates Advisor
Others:	None.	

H107 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence at the meeting.

H108 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared by members at the meeting.

H109 MINUTES - 18 JANUARY 2021

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments meeting held on 18 January 2021.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 18 January 2021 were a true and correct of the meeting and should be signed by the Chair.

H110 MATTERS ARISING - 18 JANUARY 2021

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 18 January 2021.

H111 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of public present at the meeting.

H112 CORN EXCHANGE WORKING PARTY MINUTES

Members received and considered the minutes of the Corn Exchange Working Party held on 1 March 2021.

The Chair of the Working Party, Cllr Collins drew particular attention to its request for a supplementary budget of £2,000 towards consultancy fees, towards the construction supervision of the Corn Exchange Main Hall refurbishment.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Corn Exchange Working Party held on 1 March 2021 and the recommendations contained therein be approved.

H113 OPERATIONAL REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations & Estates Advisor which offered updates on the progress of improvements and repairs since the last meeting.

Members heard that there was an additional update on the Town Hall building. Surveyors had asked to inspect the beams and walls to understand the extent of any beetle infestation.

The Chair asked that it be noted that the Cemetery was looking cleaner, tidier and safer following some remedial work to the hedges. It was agreed that thanks should be sent to the works team and the contractors, Continental Landscapes.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

H114 CEMETERIES UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations & Estates Advisor concerning closed churchyards at St Mary's and Holy Trinity churches and imminent stability testing of graves.

Stability testing would be taking place shortly so officers advised exclusive right of burial owners would be notified in ample time. Previously, several methods had been used including, social media, the newspaper and an open day where the testing was carried out in front of grave owners. The Friends of the Cemeteries Group would be asked to also advertise on its platforms.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

H115 TOWER HILL CEMETERY ACCESS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations & Estates Advisor concerning pedestrian and vehicular access at Tower Hill Cemetery.

Members heard that a consultation on the proposed pedestrian access at the top end of the cemetery would be opening in the following week. Exclusive Right of Burial owners with graves

in the vicinity would be written to before fliers were delivered to residents on Smith's Estate the following week. There had been no response from the Diocese of Oxford as to whether permission would be needed to go through the wall but if these two items affirmed the project, it would be able to proceed quite quickly.

Members also received the external report on DDA compliance and access at the Cemetery. The report was welcomed by the committee and there were no urgent items. However, future changes would be required along with those pointed out in the Town Council's risk assessment.

There was hope that the cemetery could be open for access every day of the year from 9am to 4pm, except Christmas Day which would provide a wider spread of visiting times. The bollard would remain for the time being, and booked out during the week, while any changes were adjusted to and because of concerns regarding the top loop arrangements.

It was recommended that vehicle access remained the same until the needs were costed, prioritised and sent to the Open Spaces Strategy for review.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted: and,
2. That the vehicular access at Tower Hill remains as it is at present until the recommendations in the audit can be implemented; and,
3. That the recommendations of the audit are reviewed as part of the Open Spaces Strategy; and,
4. That Officers evaluate the requirements to budget and prioritise them ahead of the next meeting of this committee; and,
5. That Officers obtain quotes for these works.

RECOMMENDED:

6. That an underspend of the maintenance budget 4036/301 be rolled over towards these works in 2021/22.

H116 ALLOTMENTS UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations & Estates Advisor advising of updates on Windrush Place and Lakeside allotments. There were also requests for equipment and maintenance at the Windrush Place, Newland and Farmers Close sites.

Members heard that the Windrush Place allotments should be handed over to the Allotment Association at the end of April. 55 sheds, including two disabled units, at a cost of £22,000 for delivery and installation would be erected soon along with 55 rainwater butts and 6 standpipes. Water troughs would not be provided and although the water butt could be filled from the standpipes, allotments would not be permitted to be watered in that way. A small Community-use building on the site would cost approximately £3,000.

A member noted that allotments sheds should not be used for anything other than to store allotment equipment. Previously, some allotment holders had used them as storage extension to their homes. It was noted that this should form part of their terms and conditions and could be reviewed as part of lease negotiations.

The Committee was advised that Windrush Place and Lakeside representatives had requested communal compost areas. The Council had hoped to utilise compost bins already bought but had costed these larger communal 3-bay areas, made from oak sleepers at approximately £3,000 each. Members agreed that providing the funding was available these seemed a reasonable request to help meet the Council's green initiatives.

A new boundary fence had been requested at the Hailey Road/Farmers Close site and members were advised that the current one was reviewed in 2019 and was in poor condition. It was agreed that Officers should obtain quotes for a 6ft green paladin fence, to provide new vehicle and pedestrian entrances.

Representatives from the Newland site had approached the Council, requesting the provision of a secure metal shed to store equipment for boundary maintenance they were obliged to carry out at the site, costing approximately £1,200. Members agreed this was a sensible suggestion, providing a budget could be sought.

The Town Clerk confirmed there was an earmarked reserve for providing new and improving existing allotments where these requests could be funded from. It was noted there were currently 160-170 names on the waiting list for allotments so further land should be considered from this funding if it became available.

Members also heard that flooding at Lakeside allotments, already an annual issue, appeared to be getting worse year on year. It was agreed that professional advice would be required on how this could be rectified, with the Environment Agency also being contacted.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted; and,
2. That the provision of sheds at Windrush Place allotments be noted; and
3. That the provision of 3 bay composting areas at both Lakeside and Windrush Place allotments be agreed; and,
4. That the request from Newland Allotments for a secure metal shed to store maintenance equipment be agreed; and,
5. That Officers present quotes for new boundary fencing at Farmer's Close allotments at the next meeting of the committee; and,
6. That Officers seek advice from professionals and the Environment Agency concerning flooding at Lakeside allotments.

H117 **LAKESIDE ALLOTMENTS ACCESS ROAD**

The Committee received correspondence from a resident concerning access to Lakeside allotments from Witney Road, Ducklington.

Members heard this had been an issue before and a sign was erected to avoid this happening many years ago. There were several historical points on the access made and it was noted that a number of those accessing the lake this way were residents of Ducklington coming to Witney, not just allotment holders. It was agreed that further investigation was needed before a final decision on actions could be made.

RESOLVED:

1. That the correspondence be noted; and,
2. That the matter be delegated to the Town Clerk to formulate a solution based on consultation with others, including Ducklington Parish Council.

The meeting closed at: 6.50 pm

Chair

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HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 24 May 2021

Title: Cemeteries Update

Contact Officer: Cemeteries, External Contracts & Compliance Officer –
Tracy Minns

Background

The purpose of this report is to update committee members on cemetery matters.

Current Situation

Survey for the proposed new access to Tower Hill Cemetery

Total number of responses was 84 and of these 51 were grave owners. In total 29 of the responses were in favour of a new entrance and 45 were not. Of the total number of responses 60.71% were grave owners and 68.63% of these were not in favour of the new entrance mainly for reasons such as anti-social behaviour, providing a shortcut to other destinations or dog walking. Most responses in favour of the new entrance were residents of the Smiths estate and other than the small number of these needing to access graves it would seem the rest would find it useful as a short cut to get into town. Only 9 responses were completed on-line using Survey Monkey.

Memorial Gate Windrush Cemetery

A request has been made by a member of the public to replace the wooden gate leading into the ashes area at Windrush. The individual has an ashes grave for his daughter and several reserved grave spaces along the ashes path. Please see attached the email received.

Up-date on Cemetery Rules and Regulations

Due to the re-organisation of Council staff this task has moved to the new Cemetery, Contracts and Compliance Officer and will be completed in time for the next cycle of meetings

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Due to the nature of the works involved in creating a hole in a drystone wall and tarmacking over grass there will be an associated environmental impact to any wildlife flora and fauna in the vicinity.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

The risk identified from increasing pedestrian movement in the cemetery would be the danger from moving vehicles. Vehicular access may need to be reduced to avoid the danger to pedestrians.

Allowing the installation of a new gate in memory of an individual may set a precedent which would need to be considered when looking at future requests

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

There are quotes attached for the work that would be involved for the work to provide a new access and path in Tower Hill Cemetery. As there is no budget for this associated works will have to come from capital reserves.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. The results from the survey
2. Application for a memorial gate
3. Selection of contractors for footpath and wall works if agreed.

Tracy Minns

From:
Sent: 21 April 2021 12:42
To: Tracy Minns
Subject:

Hello Tracy,

Thanks for calling back this morning.

As discussed, our daughter Alison worked at Waitrose for several years before she passed away in 2017 aged 37. The Partners there were very fond of her and collected a substantial amount of money in her name that we would like to spend in a tangible way if possible.

There are plenty of memorial benches, trees etc, and one option that looked viable was a plaque in her name, but understandably the Woolgate Centre demurred on this due to the potential for the floodgate effect.

The idea that I would like to put before the Council then, is a "Memorial Gate" to replace the wooden gate into the ashes area at Windrush Cemetery. The idea would be to commission a design approved by the Council, perhaps in wrought iron or similar.

Alisons fund stands at £937 which seems to me a good start to whatever the gate and associated work would cost.

I hope this idea might be looked upon favourably by those that make these decisions, and I look forward to your advice.

Many thanks and kind regards,

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Quotes for Tower Hill Cemetery New Access Footpath

<u>Company</u>	<u>Quote</u>	<u>Differences in Specification.</u>
Company 1	£9,243.00 plus VAT	Dense binder course 60mm thick dense surface course 25mm thick, Combined 85mm.
Company 2	£14,880.00 plus VAT	Combined dense binder and surface courses 60mm.

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Quotes for Tower Hill Cemetery New Access Through Wall

All quotes do not include additional cost of gate and posts or installation of gate except for provision to install gate frame.

Approx. cost of gate & posts £200-£400 dependant on type and style chosen.

<u>Company</u>	<u>Quote</u>	<u>Differences in Specification.</u>
Company 1	£3,519 plus VAT	
Company 2	£2,740plus VAT	
Company 3	£1,810 plus VAT	

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HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 24 May 2021

Title: Allotments Update

Contact Officer: Operations & Estates Advisor - John Hickman

Background

At the last Halls Cemeteries and Allotments Committee meeting on the 14th of March 21 Councillors requested that Officers present quotes for new boundary fencing at Hailey Road Allotments at the next meeting of the Committee; and, that Officers seek advice from professionals and the Environment Agency concerning flooding at Lakeside Allotments.

Current Situation

Windrush Place Allotments

The Builders have sent through their invoices for work carried out, these are on hold until the Operations and Estates Advisor issues a completion certificate and at this current time there are a number of snagging items that require to be dealt with before a completion certificate can be issued.

The sheds for each allotment have been delivered and are in place on each allotment.

The materials for the Composting bays are ready when the works team is available to construct the composting bins.

The water standpipes are here and awaiting the works team to install.

The Composting toilets are due to be delivered on Friday 14th May.

The Water Butts are ordered, a delivery date is to be confirmed.

Guttering materials etc. are available for the Works Team to install at their earliest opportunity.

The Community Hub is due for delivery between the 17th and 21st July.

The Metal store shed has been ordered is due for delivery at the end of June.

Hailey Road Allotments

Councillors have requested Officers to provide quotes for boundary fencing to Hailey Road Allotments, 3 Contractors have been asked to quote for these works, the Maintenance and Environment Officer has also requested the opportunity to price for the work to be carried out in house. If the quotes are available by the time of this meeting, they will be made available to members. Allotment holders will need to be requested to clear items, debris

etc. that they have against or in very close proximity to the existing fence line to allow for installation of the new fence if agreed by council.

Newland allotments

The Metal store shed for Newland Allotments has been ordered and Officers are awaiting its delivery at the end of June.

Lakeside Allotments

The materials for the Composting bays are ready when the works team are available to construct the composting bins.

Officers were requested to seek advice from professionals and the Environment Agency regarding flooding at Lakeside allotments.

The Environment Agency has been contacted about this issue and has been acknowledged we Officers are now waiting for a response regarding the items raised.

Professional guidance regarding the flooding was sought in line with financial regulations from 3 from companies however only one company responded and provided a quote for a topographical survey around Lakeside Allotments to determine the extent of a bund that would be needed to prevent flooding to the allotments.

The Lakeside allotments access road owners' issues regarding general public using the access road to Lakeside Allotments an agreement has now been reached. Signage to indicate it is a private road and access is only for allotment holders and, no parking signage has been agreed. Signage etc. is ordered and will be installed in due course.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates. Due to Climate change it is likely the flooding issues at Lakeside allotments may increase in future years.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability. Officers are still waiting on a response from the Environment Agency on any potential Health and Safety Risk from contaminated flood water on Lakeside allotments.

Financial implications

Signage for the Lakeside Allotment to be taken from budget line 305/ allotment reserves.

Topographical Survey to be taken from budget line 305/allotment reserves.

Hailey Road allotment boundary fencing to be taken from budget line 305 allotment reserves.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Carrying out a topographical survey around Lakeside allotments to determine the extent of a bund that would be needed to prevent flooding to the allotments.
2. The quotes for associated boundary fencing works to Hailey Road allotments (if these are available at this meeting.)

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Quotes for Hailey Road Allotment Boundary Fence

Quotes have two Elements One is for the main quote to provide boundary fencing to 2 sides of boundary fencing that abut roads and the second element id for boundary fencing to one side that abuts housing back gardens.

<u>Company</u>	<u>Quote Area 1</u>	<u>Quote Area 2</u>	<u>Differences in Specification.</u>
Company 1	£8,200.00 + VAT	£2,820.00 + VAT	1.8m High Uniform Mesh similar to (Paladin) fencing
Company 2	£5,863.00 + VAT	£2,515.26 + VAT	1.8m V Mesh Fencing similar to Paladin
Company 2	£6,515.26 + VAT		1.8m Paladin mesh fencing.
Company 3	Not yet replied		
In House			

Topographical Survey around Witney Allotments

Company 1	£1,527.50 + VAT

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