

**HALLS & GREEN SPACES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE  
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Held on Monday, 11 November 2019**

**At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney**

**Present:**

Councillor V Gwatkin (Chair)

Councillors:	L Duncan	D Enright
	D Butterfield	M Jones
	O Collins	H Eaglestone
Officers:	Nicky Cayley	Democratic Services Officer
	Adam Clapton	Office Manager
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	John Hickman	Operations & Estates Officer
Others:	0 members of the public.	

**H438 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for their absence were received from Cllrs Ashby, Bolger and King.

**H439 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

**H440 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned so that Mr Terry Powell could address the committee about lighting systems in the Corn Exchange.

After this address, the Committee reconvened.

**H441 MINUTES**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2019.

**Matters Arising**

The Town Clerk referred to minute H364 (1) and advised that Cottsway had offered a 10-year lease of Park Road Play area for £125 per annum, as they were asserting that neither they or the Town Council could prove ownership. They were potentially interested in putting affordable housing on the site. The Town Clerk would explore options for proving ownership with the solicitor, and would report back to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee or Full Council.

H442 **OFFICER'S WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted.

H443 **OPERATIONAL REPORT - PROGRESS ON IMPROVEMENTS AND REPAIRS SINCE LAST MEETING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer updating on various items and areas across the estate.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted.

H444 **PUBLIC HALLS**

a) Corn Exchange Working Party Minutes – 4 November 2019

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Corn Exchange Working Party held on 4 November 2019.

b) Corn Exchange Phase 2 Priorities

The Committee received and considered the report of the Office Manager, further to a working party meeting and meetings with various consultants. A quick fix would be to enable the doors to open wide enough to allow more people to leave the building in a short space of time which would enable the capacity to be increased in terms of fire regulations. Members agreed that this should be done by the works staff.

Members were more cautious about committing to lighting and audio systems as they did not want to have to rectify something that may not work for the building when the vision had been developed further. It was agreed that it would be better for a consultant to look at these items as part of an overall plan for the building and to employ the services of Oxford Art Consultants above others to undertake this work due to their previous experience of the building.

**RESOLVED:**

a) that the minutes of the Corn Exchange Working Party held on 4 November 2019 be noted and the recommendations contained therein approved;

b) that in terms of phase two priorities, the fire exit doors be adjusted to allow more people to exit the building and therefore increase the capacity; and that Oxford Arts Consultants be employed to develop a plan for the Corn Exchange.

H445 **CEMETERIES, WAR MEMORIALS AND CLOSED CHURCH YARDS**

a) War Memorial

The Committee received and considered correspondence from Mrs J Dolby regarding casualties of WW1 who she believed were not recorded on the war memorial. She had decided to contact

the Town Council after hearing that the name of Lucy Harris was to be added to the War Memorial.

Members noted that some of the names listed may be on memorials in surrounding villages and Cllr Jones offered to ask Mr Clements (who had made the request to add Lucy Harris to the War Memorial) to carry out some research on the names and see if they were recorded somewhere else.

b) Windrush Cemetery – Wildflower Meadow

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer about wildflowers on the meadow burial area at Windrush Cemetery. The area that had been trialled as a cultivated wildflower area had been extremely successful but it would be very expensive to maintain this annually.

Working with the Land Army and Toby Swift from the Wychwood Project, the Operations and Estates Officer suggested that it may be better to sow with yellow rattle which was self-seeding and would cost far less. Members discussed this and it was agreed that this was a good option, especially as the ground would then be prepared for any other seeding that may be done. The Operations and Estates Officer proposed that families with members buried in this area could be offered the chance to purchase seed bombs to sow on the graves. This should then create both an attractive display and wildflower area which would hopefully self-seed. This was agreed to be a good idea and Cllr Jones said that she would raise this at the next Friends of the Cemeteries meeting and ask if anyone would like to donate money to purchase a seed bomb. The Town Clerk advised contacting Earthwatch as it was running a Naturehood project which was handing out seeds.

**RESOLVED:**

a) that the correspondence from J Dolby be noted and that Cllr Jones ask Mr Clements to carry out further research into the names suggested to ensure that they were not recorded on any other war memorials in neighbouring villages;

b) that the report be noted and that the meadow burial area of the Windrush Cemetery be cultivated with yellow rattle and that the possibility of using seed bombs on individual graves is explored. Officers should make contact with Earthwatch to see if they could help in this respect.

H446 **SPORTS AND RECREATION GROUNDS**

a) Buttercross Lane Footpath

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer and quotes for the path to be constructed.

b) Leys Recreation Ground – Pitch Renovations

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer. Members discussed the fact that the area containing pitch 1 could not host both sports and events. Quotes had been obtained to put the pitch back into operation but members agreed that it would be better to leave this side of The Leys purely for events, although some basic maintenance and decompaction would be required for the public's ad hoc use, as it was still ultimately a recreation ground for public use.

The Committee discussed the recommendations made by the Operations and Estates Officer but agreed to defer these as there were meetings with WODC (with the possibility of new pitches) and Wood Green School coming up. Members also felt that they needed to discuss options further with the Spartans before making firm decisions.

c) Witney Swifts Cricket Club

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer and correspondence from The Club, regarding the relocation to West Witney Sports Ground.

d) West Witney Bowls Club Footpath

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer, concerning the resurfacing of the footpath at the Club.

e) Sports Pitches, Bowls Maintenance Specification & Pesticide Policy

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer and the STRI report on Grounds Maintenance and a pesticide policy for sports pitches.

f) West Witney Sports and Social Club

Cllr Gwatkin provided a verbal update on the status of West Witney Sports and Social Club.

g) Sports Strategy

The Town Clerk gave a verbal report on the sports strategy explaining that a piece of work that was done in 2012 was being updated and would be brought back to the Committee when ready.

**RECOMMENDED:**

a) that the report be noted and that the work be carried out to the Buttercross Path by G Ayres at a cost of £2,388.00 plus VAT;

b) to defer consideration of the Operations and Estates Officer's recommendations relating to the Leys Recreation Ground and maintenance of football pitch 1 until meetings had been held with WODC, the Spartans and Wood Green School;

c) that the report regarding the Witney Swifts Cricket Club be noted and :-

- i. the Swifts Cricket Club be given permission to use the Cricket Pavilion at West Witney Sports Ground and to carry out works to the kitchen etc and the decoration;
- ii. that provision for the requirement of additional tables and chairs in the pavilion be made from the Town Council's storage;
- iii. that permission be given for a 10' x 8' or 8' shipping container to be sited for the Swifts at West Witney Sports Ground;
- iv. that permission be given for the storage of cricket covers etc over winter in the old Grounds Contractors depot;
- v. that permission be given for portable cricket practice nets and that the additional costs for the provision of a practice wicket be added to the Grounds Maintenance Contract;

- vi. that permission be given to place a cricket score box/shed at West Witney Sports Ground in a suitable area for cricket that does not affect other sports at the site;
- vii. that the Witney Swifts Cricket Club be given permission to carry out additional match rolling/marketing etc;
- viii. that Cllr Gwatkin speaks to the Club about any requirements they may have for match funding.

d) that the report in respect of West Witney Bowls Club be noted and: -

- i. West Witney Bowls Club be informed that there is a requirement for the irrigation cabling to be either sheathed or buried deeper to a depth of 18" in order to protect the cable from damages and that if this is not done a written undertaking must be given stating that Witney Town Council or its contractors will not be held responsible for any damage to the cable in the future;
- ii. that G Ayres is employed to undertake the footpath works at a cost of £3,180.00 plus VAT, and that the Operations and Estates Officer tries to negotiate a discount as the contractor will be carrying out multiple works for the Town Council.

e) that the report on sports pitches, bowls maintenance specification and pesticide policy be noted and: -

- i. that the new Sports pitch Pesticide Policy be agreed;
- ii. that the increased Sports Pitches and Bowls Greens Specification be agreed;
- iii. that the additional cost on the Grounds Maintenance Contract for the updated specification be agreed;

f) that the verbal update from Cllr Gwatkin on the status of West Witney Sports & Social Club be noted;

g) that the verbal update from the Town Clerk in respect of the Council's Sports Strategy be noted.

**H447 PLAY AREAS - LEYS RECREATION GROUND - SPLASH PAD**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer and correspondence from a resident who was asking for the splash pad to be turned on for a day if it was unseasonably warm after it had been shut down for the season. It was explained that it was a long process to get the splash pad up and running again and that it took several days so it was not possible to be instantly reactive.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted and the resident be advised as above.

**H448 AMENITY AREAS - FARMERS CLOSE SCREENING WORKS T&B MOTORS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer providing an update on the situation at Farmers Close following last year's fire at T and B Motors. Complaints had been received about the unsightly boundary that was defined by temporary steel hoarding on the Town Council's land. The Enforcement Officer at WODC was not planning to take action at this point in time and T and B Motors had reported that they estimated a 6 – 12-month period before the boundary was replaced as they needed to determine what the best course of action would be.

**RESOLVED:** that the report and correspondence be noted and that the Town Clerk writes back to the Enforcement Officer asking for action to be taken and asking for the 6 – 12 months estimated time to be reduced to a more reasonable timescale.

H449 **FINANCIAL REPORTS - REVISED BUDGET 2019/20 AND PROPOSED BUDGET 2020/21**

a) Revised Revenue Budget 2019/20 and Base Revenue Budget for 2020/21

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk.

b) Schedule of Proposed Burial Fees and Charges

The Committee received and considered the proposed schedules of charges and the report of the Cemeteries Officer. The report explained new legislation, The Children's Funeral Fund, making any fees payable surrounding the burial of a child up to the age of 18 to be provided free at the point of need with reimbursement claimed by the burial authority. It was noted that foetal remains pre 24 weeks gestation, were not covered and Members considered these cases should be exempt from payment to the Town Council for parents.

c) Schedule of Proposed Hall Hire Fees and Charges 2020/21

The Committee received and considered the proposed schedule of fees and charges for Hall Hire for the forthcoming fiscal year.

d) Schedule of Proposed Recreation Fees and Charges 2020/21

The Committee received and considered the proposed schedule of fees and charges for Recreation for the forthcoming fiscal year.

e) Revised Capital and Special Revenue Projects programme 2019/20

Unfortunately, due to time constraints the Town Clerk had not been able to provide an update report on this year's capital and special revenue projects programme for which she apologised.

f) Revised Growth items and Capital/Special Revenue Projects Programme 2020/21 and Beyond

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk and was asked if there were any other items that it would like to see added in.

**RECOMMENDED:**

a) that the report on the revised revenue budget 2019/20 and base revenue budget for 2020/21 be noted;

b) that the report be noted and: -

- i. that new fees associated with burial, Exclusive Rights of Burial and for the right to erect an approved memorial or ashes tablet for children under 18 in line with the current charges for interments for persons over 16 years be introduced,
- ii. that new fees associated with burial, Exclusive Rights of Burial and for the right to erect an approved memorial or ashes tablet for children under 18 be introduced as specified in the report,

- iii. that the Council continues to provide burials free of charge for any miscarriage or foetal matter pre 24 weeks gestation and that no charge is made for the Exclusive Rights of Burial,
  - iv. that the remaining charges are increased by 2% as outlined in the circulated report.
- c) that the proposed increase of 2% in Public Hall hire charges as circulated be agreed rounded up where necessary;
- d) that the proposed increase of 2% relating to the recreational charges for cricket, bowls, changing rooms, and football be agreed and a 5% increase for clubs and commercial use be agreed as circulated;
- e) that the Town Clerk provides an update report on this year's capital and special revenue projects programme to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee if possible;
- f) that the revenue growth items and capital/special revenue projects programme 2020/21 and beyond be noted.

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The meeting closed at: 7.50 pm

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Chair