

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

Held on Monday, 23 May 2022

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

Present:

Councillor M Jones (Chair)

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|--------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Councillors: | V Gwatkin | L Duncan |
| | T Ashby | P Hiles |
| | O Collins | J Aitman |
| Officers: | Adam Clapton | Deputy Town Clerk |
| | Simon Wright | Democratic & Legal Services Officer |
| Others: | One member of the public. | |

H229 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Butterfield and Enright.

Councillor Aitman attended for Councillor Enright.

H230 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

H231 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Committee.

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Duncan Enright be elected. There being no other nominations it was:

Resolved:

That, Councillor Duncan Enright be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2022/2023 municipal year.

H232 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 14 March 2022 were received.

H115 – Corn Exchange Decoration and Damp Works

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the works had been completed and had come in under budget.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee held on 14 March 2022 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair

H233 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

Mr Barry Jessel representing Witney Allotment Association addressed the committee in respect of Agenda Item No. 16 – Allotments and Schools

The Committee reconvened following public participation

At the request of the Chair the Committee agreed to take Agenda Item No. 16 - Allotments and Schools before Agenda Item No. 6

H234 **ALLOTMENTS AND SCHOOLS**

The Committee considered details of a project to helping younger people in particular, and schools, get involved more in growing, understanding, and eating healthy, local foods as outlined by Mr Jessel under public participation.

Members expressed their support in principle for the initiative and welcomed the ambition to work with schools and encourage careers in horticulture. The Committee emphasised that as landowner of the allotments they did not have any direct input but could support the project by promoting on social media and through the Town Council generally.

Resolved:

That, the details of the project be noted, and the Town Council support it in principle.

H235 **COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The committee considered whether any changes were needed to the current Terms of Reference.

Resolved:

That, no amendments be made to the Terms of Reference

H236 **OPEN SPACES STRATEGY, COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk/CEO. An update was given on the projects outlined in the report and the financial and staffing resources available.

Members discussed priority items and agreed that works to the Corn Exchange, Heating at Burwell Hall and repairs to the St Mary's Churchyard wall were highest priority. In respect of the Children's Memorial Garden at the Windrush Cemetery it was noted that options needed to be considered and could therefore be considered at a later date.

Resolved:

That, works to the Corn Exchange, Heating at Burwell Hall and repairs to the St Mary's Churchyard should be the priority items.

H237 **FINANCE REPORT**

Consideration was given to the current position of the budgets allocated to the committee.

Resolved:

That, the current financial position be noted.

H238 **BURWELL HALL - HEATING SYSTEM**

The committee received the report of the Project Officer in respect of a replacement heating system at Burwell Hall.

Members thanked the Project Officer for such a detailed report and considered the options outlined. The committee expressed a preference for a Fuel Cell CHP Boiler as it offered best value for money and would require less works at the hall. It was noted that it was a relatively new technology and requested that delegation be given to finalise the scheme subject to a satisfactory case study being received.

The committee noted that the Parks & Recreation Committee had agreed the refurbishment of the changing rooms on the site and both projects would need to run concurrently.

Resolved:

1. That, the Fuel Cell CHP Boiler option be approved: and
2. That, the decision be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair of the Committee and Leader of the Council subject to a satisfactory case study and the feasibility study for the changing room works.

H239 **CORN EXCHANGE MAIN HALL & 1863 CAFE BAR OPERATIONS**

Consideration was given to the report of the Venues & Events Officer.

Members considered the recommendations in the report and noted that there was no loss of floor space when the new seating was in place. Therefore there should be no reduction in hire charges for non-performance hirers.

The committee noted the improved income and level of bookings. Discussion ensued regarding opening hours and it was agreed that the Café Bar should close on Bank Holidays as footfall was low on those days. In respect of later opening on a Friday members supported this at the discretion of the Venue & Events Officer and subject to other bookings.

Resolved:

1. That, there is no reduction of Main Hall hire charges for non-performance hirers; and
2. That, the continued opening of 1863 for longer hours on a Friday be supported at the discretion of the Venue & Events Officer.

H240 **CORN EXCHANGE WORKING PARTY**

The Committee received the minutes of the Corn Exchange Working Party together with a confidential report updating on issues that had arisen.

Members considered the options for additional works, legislative requirements, financial implications, contractual responsibilities and reputational risk. After discussion it was agreed that the works should comply with BS8300, although not a legal requirement, and revise the layout accordingly with the additional costs being approved. Members requested that the consultant fees be reviewed regarding additional fees.

The committee thanked officers for their work on the project.

Resolved:

1. That, the works should comply with BS8300, although not a legal requirement, and revise the layout accordingly;
2. That, the additional expenditure of £2,895.00 be approved for the works; and
3. That, the additional consultant fees of £700 plus VAT be reviewed and not paid at this stage.

H241 **TOWER HILL NEW FAMILY ASHES SECTION**

The committee considered the report of the Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer.

Members thanked the Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer for the report and the proactive approach that was being recommended. Members considered the proposals and supported the reduction in ashes plot sizes together with changes to the exclusive rights. In respect of Windrush Cemetery it was agreed that this should be looked at as well to ensure consistency.

Resolved:

1. That, the plot size be reduced to 1.8m x 1.2m for Section 3 of Tower Hill Cemetery;
2. That, the new period of exclusive rights of burial at Tower Hill to 30 years be approved to help extend the useability of the cemetery; and
3. That, officers be delegated to research if similar alterations at Windrush cemetery are needed and report back to Councillors.

H242 **ST MARY'S CHURCH BOUNDARY WALL**

Consideration was given to the report of the Operations & Estates Advisor.

The committee noted the extensive works that were required, the permissions that were required and the financial implications.

After discussion it was agreed to progress the high priority works and remove vegetation. In respect of appointing a contractor it was suggested that this be delegated to officers in consultation with the Chair of the Committee and Leader of Council.

Resolved:

1. That, the Priority 1 Short Term works be approved;
2. That, the selection of a contractor be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair of the Committee and the Leader of Council; and
3. That, removal of existing tree growth from wall and Biochemical/Herbicide for treatment of tree stumps and vegetative growth from the wall prior to commencement of works be supported

H243 **WINDRUSH CEMETERY ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS**

Consideration was given to the report of the Operations & Estates Advisor.

The committee considered options for the site together with the history of the site and purchase of the land in question. The financial implications were considered and it was noted that before any works could be undertaken then an archaeological study would be needed.

It was agreed that the area should be retained as present whilst options were considered.

Resolved:

1. That, other possible uses for the area be researched; and
2. That, in the meantime the area be left as at present including the maintenance regime

H244 **TOWER HILL CEMETERY 'WISHING TREE'**

Members considered a request to erect a plaque marking the tree at Tower Hill Cemetery from existing budgets.

The committee agreed to the request and noted that if the tree was removed for any reason a replacement would be provided.

Resolved:

That, the request to erect a plaque marking the wishing tree at Tower Hill Cemetery from existing budgets.

H245 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

That in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

H246 **MAJOR PROJECTS**

Members received the confidential report of the Town Clerk/CEO updating on major projects within the remit of the committee.

Consideration was given to the options for the premises identified in the report and the financial implications including alternative funding options. The committee acknowledged the possibilities for developing the premises but agreed that the project should not be progressed at this stage unless other funding options were available.

Resolved:

1. That, the update on Major Projects be noted; and
2. That, the project for the premises identified in the report should not be progressed at this stage unless other funding options were available.

The meeting closed at: 7.45 pm

Chair