

6th November 2018

Minutes of the proceedings of the **AMENITIES COMMITTEE** meeting held on this day in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HALL, WOKINGHAM** from 7:28pm to 9:58pm.

PRESENT

Cllrs N J Campbell-White (Chairman), Mrs A N Drake, Ms L Forbes, C R George (Vice-Chairman), C D Moore, T J Lack, S Odedra and M L Richards

IN ATTENDANCE

Amenities Officer (AO)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from:

Cllr J P McGhee-Sumner (the Mayor)
Cllr M S Monk
Buildings and Grounds Officer (B&GO)

MEMBERS' INTERESTS (Agenda Item 2)

There were no declarations of interests from members.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL OR PUBLIC (Agenda Item 3)

There were no questions from councillors or members of the public.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Agenda Item 4)

It was proposed by Cllr C R George and seconded by Cllr T J Lack and it was

**RESOLVED
29826**

that the minutes of the Amenities Committee meeting held on 5th September 2018 (pages 15648 to 15657) be received as a true and correct record and they be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

MONITORING REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman and AO updated the Committee on how the work to deal with the items on the monitoring report dated 22nd October 2018 is progressing.

Item 88: Wokingham Borough Council's (WBC) Highways department's refusal to allow Wokingham Town Council (WTC) to install a bench on the corner of Glebelands Road and Clare Avenue was challenged by the Chairman. He has discussed this with senior WBC councillors contending that it has health and well-being and public safety implications. A bench in this location would be a way station for residents, particularly the elderly, walking into the town centre. Cllr N J Campbell-White said he is hopeful WBC will reverse its decision and allow WTC to install a bench in this location.

ACTION: CLLR N J CAMPBELL-WHITE

Item 101: this matter will be considered under agenda item 8.

Item 113: Cllr C R George said that he has not met with WTC's Events Co-ordinator recently to discuss the redesign of the Town Hall public kitchen. Councillors felt that employing a kitchen design specialist was an unnecessary expense. The Responsible Finance Officer was asked to contact two or three external catering companies who have used the kitchen to prepare and serve meals for their ideas on how to redesign the space to maximise its utility.

ACTION: RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER

Cllr N J Campbell-White said with an outline design, companies such as Howden Joinery, will produce a scaled layout along with the fittings and appliances required.

ACTION: CLLR N J CAMPBELL-WHITE

Item 114: the AO said that the reinforced plastic mesh has now been installed in the footpath across Viking Field. The work was completed on Friday 2nd November 2018 with grass seeds scattered over the mesh.

ACTION: BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS OFFICER

The AO was instructed to remove this item from the monitoring report.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

Item 115: this matter will be considered under agenda item 17.

Item 117: Cllr G R George explained how he constructed the industrial power plug with a low volt LED light attached. He said it could be used as a permanent indicator that the power source for WTC's Christmas lights and motifs is live.

The AO confirmed that he has met with LITE's contract manager and electricians to describe the reasoning behind the potential use of these plugs. The AO reminded councillors that LITE often resolve electrical power issues when they install the motifs at little or no cost to WTC.

Councillors recognised the utility of this device but considered that the possible extra costs WTC would incur with town wide deployment may outweigh its benefits.

The AO was instructed to remove this item from the monitoring report but to retain the power plug. Once the operational effectiveness of the Christmas lights and motifs is reviewed in January 2019 the potential use of these plugs may be reconsidered.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

Councillors felt that the manufacture and use of the plugs could be included in the Christmas lights contract specification in March 2021.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

Item 118: this matter will be considered under agenda item 7.

Item 123: Councillors were pleased that the work to fund, purchase and install a new bench at Heron Park was concluded in an efficient and timely manner.

Cllr Forbes said that she is still in discussion with Morrisons supermarket, Woosehill about it funding the purchase and installation of another bench.

ACTION: CLLR MS L FORBES

Cllr Forbes was thanked for this. The AO was instructed to remove this item from the monitoring report.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

Item 125: the AO said that due to the absence of the B&GO no further progress has been made on obtaining leasing costs for an electrically powered van for the use of WTC staff. *This matter was discussed more fully under agenda item 9.*

GRAFFITI WORKING PARTY (Agenda Item 6)

The notes from the Graffiti Working Party's meeting held on 16th October 2018 were received and considered.

Cllr M S Forbes reminded councillors that the presentations to them by students from Emmbrook and St.Crispin's Schools is a significant milestone in WTC's programme to eradicate graffiti and litter across the town. Both she and the Chairman urged councillors to attend the 13th November 2018 presentations at the Town Hall.

Cllr Forbes said that work was ongoing to arrange reporting of the event by newspaper and television journalists.

She also said that she has made contact with large councils in the Southwest to discuss the involvement of local schools.

Cllr Forbes was thanked for her sterling work in bringing the schools' project to this point.

Cllr T J Lack said that he spent a good deal of time last Friday cleaning off graffiti from a number of locations around the town. He was also thanked for his ongoing work with its commitment of time and physical effort.

Councillors said that at this time WTC should not attempt to tackle the graffiti on the closed up changing room block on Barkham Recreation Ground nor that on the painted mural in the underpass near the Woosehill spine road. Both of these are both the responsibility of WBC.

NEW PLAY AREA AT ELMS FIELD (Agenda Item 7)

The AO said that WBC's regeneration team has submitted the revised play area design to WBC Planning. The design incorporates feedback town councillors gave to All-Play Ltd at the 26th July 2018 meeting.

UPDATE ON ALLOTMENT SITE AT MULBERRY GROVE (Agenda Item 8)

The AO said that the new allotment site at Mulberry Grove is nearing completion. However, the condition and quality of the topsoil provided remains a significant concern. He said that from a distance it appears that some of the obvious rubble and bricks have been removed. It remains imperative that WBC and WTC test the soil to ensure it conforms to British Standard 3882 to a depth of at least 300mm.

The AO also said that the legal transfer of the ownership of the site from Crest Nicholson Ltd (CN) to WTC cannot be completed until WTC is content that the allotment site is set up to the specification given to CN via WBC.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

The AO confirmed that the length of the waiting list for an allotment at Mulberry Grove should ensure that all plots are rented out when the site opens.

He reminded councillors that WTC intends to hold an evening gathering for those on the Mulberry Grove waiting list to meet with some experienced allotment gardeners.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

POTENTIAL PROJECTS AND FUNDING REQUESTS FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2019-20 (Agenda Item 9)

The amenities plan and p.15653 of the minutes of 5th September 2018 Amenities Committee meeting were received and considered.

Councillors discussed the projects they would like funded in financial year 2019-20 and the increases they consider necessary to existing budget lines over the same period. Councillors then agreed the priority order in which these should be presented to WTC's Finance and Personnel Committee.

- 1) Replace the three existing Town Hall boilers with two new ones – estimated cost £70,000.
- 2) Lease a van for WTC's staff to use to remove the need for the groundsman to use his personal vehicle to undertake his duties – estimated annual cost £2,500, which includes an allowance for maintenance and insurance costs. Some of this cost will be offset by the reduction in mileage expenses claimed by the groundsman.
- 3) Re-surface and extend the play area at Joel Park – estimated cost £47,000.
- 4) Increase the graffiti budget to £9,500 from £7,500 to partly reflect additional use of outside contractors and the cost of materials used by Cllr T J Lack.
- 5) Install an air conditioning system at Woosehill community hall – estimated cost £30,000.
- 6) Repair the external pointing from ground level to a height of 2.4m around the Town Hall and install periscope air bricks – estimated cost £19,000.
- 7) Increase the hanging flower basket contract to £17,000 from £11,500 to incorporate the planters and troughs introduced as part of the town's Thames and Chilterns in Bloom entry. The contract for June 2019 to May 2022 is currently out to tender.
- 8) Repaint all of the hall, landing and stairs at the Town Hall – estimated cost £15,000.
- 9) Increase the allotments repairs and maintenance budget to £4,550 from £3,650 to reflect the additional site at Mulberry Grove.
- 10) Increase the Christmas lights contract budget to £21,000 from £17,000 to fund possible new lights and/or motifs in Peach Place.
- 11) Install external lighting on the upper floor of the Town Hall – estimated cost £45,000. A detailed specification for this has been produced as part of the Market Place improvement design.

With regard to item (6) the periscope air bricks may not be required if these are dealt with as a Market Place improvements work 'snagging' item.

ACTION: RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER

Councillors expressed their concern about the appearance, cleaning and litter picking of the area around the Town Hall. It is understood that the Town Clerk is continuing to address these issues with WBC.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

Councillors said that if this matter is not satisfactorily resolved with a marked rise in the standard of cleaning and litter picking WTC should consider employing its own member of staff to carry out these duties. It is recognised that this would be a significant financial cost to WTC.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

HIRE CHARGES FOR WOKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL'S FACILITIES AND AMENITIES 2019 (Agenda Item 10)

The Responsible Finance Officer's report 2/2018-19 dated 9th October 2018 was received and considered.

Councillors supported the rationale that the charges to hire WTC's Town Hall facilities should be held at their current levels given the disruption caused by the Market Place improvement works over the past year. The other recommendations in the report were also accepted.

It was proposed by Cllr C R George and seconded by Cllr T J Lack and it was

**RESOLVED
29827**

- to increase all hire rates for Woosehill community hall by 50p
- to increase the hire charge for the football pitch at King George V playing field from £17.00 to £20.00 per match
- to introduce a £10.00 per market pitch on Tuesdays for new traders.

These increases to be effective from 1st January 2019.

ACTION: RESPONSIBLE FINANCE OFFICER/ MARKET AND BLOOM OFFICER/ AMENITIES OFFICER

REVIEW OF WOKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL'S 'WOKINGHAM IN BLOOM' GARDENING COMPETITIONS 2018 (Agenda Item 11)

The Market and Bloom Officer's (M&BO) report 1/2018-19 dated 9th October 2018 was received and considered.

The councillors accepted the majority of the recommendations in the report.

It was proposed by Cllr S Odedra and seconded by Cllr M L Richards and it was

**RESOLVED
29828**

- to standardize the value of the gardening vouchers awarded across all of the competitions
- to continue with the Town Mayor's 'outstanding achievement' award for schools. When the current Town Mayor's term of office ends he has pledged to donate a trophy for this category

- to introduce a 'best new entrant' prize across the Wokingham in Bloom allotments gardening competition
- to not discontinue the physical and sensory impairment category within the 'Greenfingers' competition
- to link WTC's Wokingham in Bloom gardening competitions more closely with the town's Thames and Chilterns in Bloom entry through increased publicity, especially via social media platforms
- to consider including a best store window display category within the competition for businesses
- to mitigate the effect of weather conditions consider the introduction of a 'my garden in photos' category for the 'Greenfingers' competition.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK/ MARKET AND BLOOM OFFICER

THAMES AND CHILTERN IN BLOOM HORTICULTURAL COMPETITION 2018 (Agenda Item 12)

The M&BO's report 2/2018-19 dated 9th October 2018 was received and considered. Among other matters this highlighted the change in the weighting of marks across the three elements of the competition proposed for 2019.

The councillors noted the excellent score achieved by the town's entry in 2018's Thames and Chilterns in Bloom competition (large town category).

The M&BO was thanked for his leadership of the town's entry and his hard work which led to the award of a prestigious silver gilt mark. This achievement is particularly noteworthy against the backdrop of the ongoing disruption around the town centre because of the Market Place improvements construction work.

The committee acknowledged that the M&BO will be sorely missed when he leaves WTC's employ in December 2018.

The councillors accepted the recommendations in the M&BO's report.

It was proposed by Cllr T J Lack and seconded by Cllr S Odedra and it was

**RESOLVED
29829**

- to enter the Thames and Chilterns in Bloom competition in 2019
- to address the areas of weakness noted in the judges' 2018 report
- to build the 2019 entry around the announced theme 'inspiring everyone to grow'
- to consider installing a floral or art feature on Market Place to celebrate the eight hundredth year of the town's charter market
- to have Bloom related activities every month of the year and to document same for the Bloom judges
- to purchase and install an additional Bloom results sign for Finchampstead Road
- to support all initiatives which can be linked with the Bloom entry
- to embed Wokingham in Bloom in all corners of the town, across all communities
- to link this with a persistent drumbeat calling for many more volunteers to be actively involved with Bloom.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK/ MARKET AND BLOOM OFFICER

When the new M&BO is appointed he or she is to be invited to discuss the Thames and Chilterns in Bloom entry with the councillors at an Amenities Committee meeting early in 2019.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK/ MARKET AND BLOOM OFFICER/ AMENITIES OFFICER

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS AND MOTIFS 2018 (Agenda Item 13)

The AO said that, in the main, WTC's Christmas lights and motifs have been installed. There are some issues the AO will be raising with the electricians on Wednesday 7th November 2018.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

The AO advised that the Christmas trees will be installed shortly after the large World War I field of remembrance has been removed from Market Place. He also reported that he has now been informed by the owner of Tudor House that to facilitate repair work to the roof of the dwelling scaffolding will be erected in front of WTC's Christmas lights in the very near future. The AO intends to meet with the householder to discuss the implications of this for the lights and to determine the best course of action.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL LAND ADJACENT TO ORMONDE ROAD ALLOTMENTS SITE (Agenda Item 14)

The AO explained his suggestion for increasing the space for car parking at WTC's Ormonde Road allotments site. The idea is to ask WBC to release the grass area to the left of the allotments gate as you approach the site along the road.

Councillors did not want to pursue this if it meant felling the four or five trees standing on this land. The AO said that to create a usable space it would involve removing the trees.

Councillors instructed the AO to approach WBC Highways department to ask if the carriageway on Ormonde Road after the turning into the standalone garages area could be released to WTC to increase the area for allotment tenants to park in.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK/AMENITIES OFFICER

The AO noted that this would reduce car parking spaces on the Ormonde Road carriageway for residents by four slots.

AMENITIES COMMITTEE INFORMATION (Agenda Item 15)

No matters were raised by councillors for inclusion on any subsequent Amenities Committee agenda.

Earlier in the meeting Cllr N J Campbell-White advised the committee that WTC is in the very early stages of gathering information from WBC about the annual cost of its grass cutting and grounds maintenance contract across Wokingham town wards. Once this is established WTC will be in a position to consider if it wants to take over responsibility for this service.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK/ AMENITIES OFFICER

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC (Agenda 16)

It was proposed by Cllr N J Campbell-White and seconded by Cllr C R George and it was

**RESOLVED
29830**

that in view of the confidential commercial nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable, in the public interest, that the press and public be temporarily excluded and that they are asked to withdraw.

PART II

ENGAGEMENT OF PLUMBING CONTRACTOR FOR SEPARATION OF MAINS WATER SUPPLIES TO THE COURTYARD AND PICCOLO ARCO RESTAURANTS (Agenda Item 17)

The Buildings and Grounds Officer's report 3/2018-19 dated 9th October 2018 was received and considered.

Councillors discussed the various quotations and noted the lack of detail on them.

It was proposed by Cllr C R George and seconded by Cllr T J Lack and it was

**RESOLVED
29831**

to engage contractor C to undertake the plumbing work at the Town Hall to install separate mains water supplies to the Courtyard and Piccolo Arco restaurants.

ACTION: BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS OFFICER

Cllr Ms L Forbes declined to state a preference for any of the quotations.

The AO said that contractor C is Ignite Mechanical Contracting Limited and that it has carried out work on behalf of WBC to a good standard.

ACTION: BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS OFFICER

The meeting closed at 9:58 pm.

CHAIRMAN