

17th January 2019

Minutes of the proceedings of the **AMENITIES COMMITTEE** meeting held on this day in the **DIAMOND JUBILEE ROOM, TOWN HALL, WOKINGHAM** from 7:31pm to 10:06pm.

PRESENT

Cllrs N J Campbell-White (Chairman), Ms L Forbes, C R George (Vice-Chairman), C D Moore and T J Lack

IN ATTENDANCE

Amenities Officer (AO)
Buildings and Grounds Officer (B&GO)
A resident

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Agenda Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from:

Cllr J P McGhee-Sumner (the Mayor)
Cllr S Odedra
Cllr M L Richards

MEMBERS' INTERESTS (Agenda Item 2)

Cllr T J Lack stated that he leads a group of volunteers called Wokingham Litter Heroes and is a member of the Wokingham in Bloom steering group.

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
29866**

that the minutes of the Amenities Committee meeting held on 6th November 2018 (pages 15685 to 15692) be received as a true and correct record and they be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

With the Committee's agreement the Chairman decided to bring agenda item 20 forward to enable the resident's request to be considered at the beginning of the meeting rather than at the end.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC (Agenda 15)

It was proposed by Cllr Ms L Forbes and seconded by Cllr T J Lack and it was

**RESOLVED
29867**

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.

REQUEST BY HOMEOWNER TO PURCHASE A STRIP OF LAND ON GIPSY LANE ALLOTMENTS SITE ADJACENT TO HIS NEW BUILD PROPERTY (Agenda Item 20)

A letter dated 12th November 2018 to the Town Clerk from the resident whose property is being constructed next to the car park at Gipsy Lane allotments site was received and considered.

The Chairman welcomed the resident and noted that the Amenities Committee has previously declined to sell the strip of land adjacent to Gipsy Lane car park to the previous owner. The resident was invited to outline the reasons behind his offer of £2,000 for the land.

The resident said that he wanted to incorporate the land, approximately 2m wide by 14m long, into his rear garden. He said the garden, as it is proposed to be configured, is very small. When asked he confirmed that there will be no access onto Gipsy Lane from his garden.

The Chairman said that it remains Wokingham Town Council's (WTC) intention to extend the car park at Gipsy Lane allotments. He said it is uncertain if the strip of land in question will be incorporated into the car park extension.

The councillors did not want to sell the strip of land at this time. However, once the car park extension is completed and, if the strip of land has not been used as part of it, councillors said that the offer of purchase could be reconsidered.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

When asked, the AO said that relevant professional advice could be sought regarding a fair monetary valuation of the strip of land.

Cllr C D Moore reminded councillors that any land sale and transfer of ownership would incur legal costs.

The resident thanked councillors for the opportunity to meet with them and left the meeting.

The Chairman said that as the meeting has now moved into Part II mode he proposed to consider agenda items 16-19 now.

TREE WORKS (Agenda Item 16)

The Buildings and Grounds Officer's report 03/2018-19 dated 11th October 2018 was received and considered.

The B&GO said that he has taken the unusual step of recommending the allocation of work to specified contractors.

He felt that his understanding of the extent and complexity of the tree work required, and his knowledge of the individual contractors, made this a sensible way to proceed. He reiterated that he has moved away from his previous

approach of assigning work from the annual tree survey to only one or two contractors. Allocating the work to several contractors has proven to be a more efficient and manageable process both for the contractors and WTC.

When asked, the B&GO said that whilst contractor G has not submitted the lowest prices his advice about tending WTC's trees to maintain their health and longevity has been especially helpful.

The B&GO confirmed that he has challenged contractor B about the validity of his low prices and has been reassured that they are realistic. The contractor has a large workforce and wants to keep it productively employed.

The B&GO noted that contractor A's prices have risen recently but said that he is based locally and is always professional and efficient. He is also very responsive when urgent work springs up.

It was proposed by Cllr N J Campbell-White and seconded by Cllr Ms L Forbes and it was

**RESOLVED
29868**

to engage contractors as follows to carry out the work required from the annual survey of WTC's tree stock at the prices each quoted:

Allotment sites	contractor A
Joel Park and Holt Copse	contractor B
Langborough Recreation Ground	contractor G
Leslie Sears Playing Field and Viking Field	contractor B
Redlands Farm Park	contractor G

ACTION: BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS OFFICER

Contractor A is Scottscape Tree Surgery, Contractor B is Landmark Tree Surgery and contractor C is Gristman Tree Surgery.

TRIENNIAL CONTRACT FOR COLLECTION OF DOG WASTE FROM WOKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL'S PARKS AND OPEN SPACES (Agenda Item 17)

The Amenities Officer's report 02/2018-19 dated 7th December 2018 was received and considered.

The AO said that since the report was written contractor B has been informed that his tender will not be considered. Contractor B is the current incumbent but he has not undertaken any dog waste removal collections since mid-December 2018 because of ill-health. He has not been contactable so WTC has had to make other arrangement to have the dog waste removed from its bins.

Councillors noted the large difference between the price submissions of contractors A and B. The Chairman said that WTC is faced with paying three or four times more than it currently does for the removal of dog waste from its twenty dedicated bins. Therefore, an alternative arrangement could be put in place that will reduce WTC's expenditure. The arrangement would be for WTC's groundsman to collect the dog waste. However, he said that this is dependent on councillors resolving for WTC to hire a van under agenda item 19.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

The B&GO said that if the groundsman undertook this removal of dog waste WTC would have to obtain an appropriate waste carrier's licence.

ACTION: BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS OFFICER

TRIENNIAL CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY AND MAINTENANCE OF HANGING FLOWER BASKETS (Agenda Item 18)

The Amenities Officer's report 04/2018-19 dated 19th December 2018 was received and considered.

Councillors expressed their disappointment that the specification for the contract does not include hanging baskets and/ or planters for Market Place or Peach Place.

The AO said that whilst the specification does incorporate planters previously provided by Wokingham in Bloom it had not been possible to include notional displays on Market Place or Peach Place as decisions have not been made by the relevant actors about the positions and configurations of any such displays.

The B&GO asked if the contractor, when appointed, could water the recently planted trees on Market Place?

The AO said this was possible but would be by separate negotiation.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

It was proposed by Cllr T J Lack and seconded by Cllr Ms L Forbes and it was

**RESOLVED
29869**

to award WTC's triennial contract (1st June 2019 to 31st May 2022) for the supply and maintenance of hanging flower baskets along with ancillary planting to company B for £14,205 per annum excluding VAT.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

The AO said that company B is Windowflowers Ltd.

CONTRACT HIRE OF VEHICLE FOR USE BY WOKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL STAFF (Agenda Item 19)

The Buildings and Grounds Officer's report 04/2018-19 dated 19th December 2018 was received and considered.

The B&GO confirmed that the prices in his report are, with the exception of contract A, based on a new Citroen Berlingo van in white with a diesel engine, the most popular van in its class. He said that very recently he obtained a quotation for the contract hire of a Ford Transit Connect 210 van with a petrol engine. With the Chairman's permission he distributed a paper detailing the hire costs of this van.

Councillors noted that the Ford Transit Connect was more expensive to hire than all of the vans listed in the report. The wide variance in the annual price per mile excess across contracts A to F was also pointed out by councillors. The B&GO said that this only comes into effect if the annual mileage exceeds either 8,000 or 10,000. He said that the annual miles driven by the groundsman in his personal vehicle on WTC business averages 2,800 so it is extremely unlikely that the excess mileage charge would come into play.

The B&GO noted that the van would be locked in Ormonde Road allotment site overnight. A full plywood bulkhead would be fitted. The B&GO said that the quotations were from national dealers and none were interested in having their business advertised on the van.

Councillors felt that the van should display WTC's crest, Wokingham Town Council, and 'protecting your environment' on it. This branding should be painted onto magnetic removable panels.

The B&GO was asked to contact the Marketing Officer for her approval of this branding or her suggestions for any different approach.

ACTION: BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS OFFICER

The B&GO pointed out that the contracts vehicle leasing market is a dynamic environment and prices quoted may alter between quotation and order.

The Chairman said that once the van has been leased WTC's groundsman will use it to collect the dog waste from WTC's twenty discrete dog bins and the refuse from its general litter bins. This will remove the need for WTC to contract out the removal of dog waste to a third party.

It was proposed by Cllr C R George and seconded by Cllr C D Moore and it was

**RESOLVED
29870**

for the B&GO to confirm the quotations of contracts B and F with the addition of a roof vent and for the B&GO to enter into a vehicle leasing agreement for a new, white Citroen Berlingo 650k diesel powered van with the contract providing best value.

Contract B is with Nationwide Vehicle Leasing and contract F is with Click 4 Car Leasing.

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

**RESOLVED
29871**

to end Part II mode and that members of the public and press are to be welcomed back to the meeting room.

MONITORING REPORT (Agenda Item 5)

The Chairman, AO and B&O updated the Committee on how the work to deal with the items on the monitoring report dated 8th January 2019 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.

Cllr N J Campbell-White said that despite Mr C Easton, head of Highways, WBC acceding to this request, Highways Assets, WBC continue to withhold its permission. Cllr Campbell-White said he has contacted Mr Easton again and is awaiting his further response.

ACTION: CLLR N J CAMPBELL-WHITE

It was agreed that WTC could not proceed with the purchase and installation of the bench without the written permission of WBC.

ACTION: BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS OFFICER

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

Item 113: the B&GO conceded that no substantive progress has been made on redesigning and refitting the public kitchen in the Town Hall since this was first raised in November 2017. However, the matter has been discussed by many councillors and officers. The B&GO has concluded that the small size of the kitchen affords little opportunity to redesign the layout of cupboards and appliances to create significant additional workspace. Therefore, he is proposing that the layout is largely left as it is, the oven is replaced and a table top glass washing machine is installed.

The B&GO was asked to involve the Events Coordinator and pursue this option quickly.

ACTION: BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS OFFICER

Item 115: the B&GO said that a discrete mains water supply has been successfully introduced for the Town Hall, Courtyard and Piccolo Arco restaurants. This will allow the water usage of both restaurants to be monitored and then compared to the service charge currently levied on them by WTC.

Other significant advantages are that each supply can be isolated in the event of a problem and that good water pressure will be maintained throughout the Town Hall building.

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

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

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

Item 125: this matter will be considered under agenda item 9.

Item 126: Councillors expressed their disappointment with the litter picking and cleaning standards both on Market Place and around the wider town centre. The B&GO said that he and the Town Clerk recently met with Mr P Baveystock, WBC, Cleaner and Greener, to discuss this matter with him. Councillors can expect to see more onsite supervision of OCS cleaning staff which should lead to an improvement in standards.

The Chairman said that the leader of WBC Cllr J P McGhee-Sumner was also working to achieve an improvement in litter picking and cleaning across the town. However, WBC's programme to wash and seal the pavement around the Town Hall has been scaled back from six to three times a year because of ongoing cost constraints.

Councillors asked the Town Clerk to investigate what it would cost WTC to pay for better litter picking and more cleaning on Market Place.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

The AO was instructed to procure a good quality fuel powered hand-held street vacuum cleaner for use by Wokingham Litter Heroes.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

The B&GO said that it has not proven possible to retrofit a more effective 'cigarette stubber' to the new refuse bins on Market Place. The cost of replacing these bins was significant.

Item 127: the AO said that Mr M Gould, WBC, Highways has committed to officially responding, by the end of January 2019, to WTC's request to incorporate a 16m stretch of Ormonde Road highway into the adjacent allotments car park.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

GRAFFITI WORKING PARTY (Agenda Item 6)

The notes from the Graffiti Working Party's meeting held on 14th November 2018 were received and considered.

Cllr Ms L Forbes thanked councillors for their attendance at the recent schools graffiti project presentation evening. She said that the The Emmbrook School is to present their project to another school in the near future. She noted that WTC's Strategy Committee has agreed that The Forest School, Winnersh, can take part in WTC's 2019 schools graffiti project.

ACTION: MS L FORBES

It was proposed by Cllr Ms L Forbes and seconded by Cllr N J Campbell-White and it was

**RESOLVED
29872**

that £2,000 can be ring-fenced from the 2019-20 WTC graffiti budget as prizes for the 2019 schools graffiti project.

ACTION: GRAFFITI WORKING PARTY

Cllr Ms L Forbes said that she anticipates three schools taking part in 2019 with main awards of £1,000, £500 and £250 for the schools. There will be awards of store gift cards or similar for the individual pupils taking part.

ACTION: GRAFFITI WORKING PARTY

The Chairman extended the gratitude of the committee to Cllr Ms L Forbes and Cllr T J Lack for their ongoing efforts in tackling the scourge of graffiti in Wokingham town.

Cllr Lack continues to be very active in removing graffiti across the town.

NEW PLAY AREA AT ELMS FIELD (Agenda Item 7)

The AO said that a decision on the planning submission for the play area at Elms Field is expected by the end of next week.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

When asked he said that he understood that the feedback provided by some town councillors to All Play Ltd on their proposed plans for the equipment and the layout has been incorporated into the final submission.

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

The AO told councillors that an onsite meeting was held with Crest Nicholson (CN) surveyors and WBC officers on 29th November 2018. Several minor

snagging matters were pointed out by the AO which CN have satisfactorily resolved. The quality of the topsoil and its depth remain a concern. However, of greater significance is the hard pan around 300mm below the surface. This is evident across the whole site. It proved impossible to break into it with a garden spade in random places on several plots. As a consequence many of the plots had pools of standing water on them.

The AO advised CN that WTC could not accept the site in this condition and that the clay pan must be broken up and in large part removed.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

Cllr C R George pointed out that the site was previously used as CN's works compound with a hard core and rolled surface. The use of heavy vehicles on the space further compacted the surface. In his view CN has made no attempt to remove this surface.

The AO said that as of 16th January 2019 there has been little evidence of corrective action since the 29th November 2018 meeting with CN.

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

The amenities plan and p.15688-89 of the minutes of 6th November 2018 Amenities Committee meeting were received and considered along with the relevant extract from the minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee (F&P) meeting held on 20th November 2018.

The Chairman noted that F&P accepted the Amenities Committee's recommendations for monetary increases to a number of existing budget lines. However, only some new capital projects were supported as detailed on the F&P minute.

With regard to the resurfacing of the existing Joel Park play area and, the increase in its footprint to incorporate play equipment for very young children, the AO reminded councillors that the procurement process would be via central government's Contracts Finder website. The AO said that in order for this to provide realistic comparative schemes it would be prudent to establish an outline specification which could be delivered within the approved budget of £47,000. To this end the AO planned to meet with representatives of one or two play equipment providers to draw on their expertise to produce a broad specification.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

It was agreed that the views of local residents would be sought.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

Cllr Ms L Forbes expressed her disappointment that the work to install periscope ventilation bricks around the Town Hall has not been achieved as part of the recent Market Place improvement works.

The B&GO said that WTC has arranged for a contractor to carry out this work at its expense week commencing 25th March 2019.

ACTION: BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS OFFICER

The B&GO outlined potential courses of action with the ongoing work to repair the clock tower and clock face on the Town Hall building.

ACTION: BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS OFFICER

WOKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL'S STINK PIPES (Agenda Item 10)

Emails from Cllr I L Shepherd-Dubey and the B&GO were received and considered.

The B&GO said that two of these Victorian era 'stink pipes' are situated on WTC land – at Joel Park and Langborough Recreation Ground. Their function was to disperse unpleasant odours emanating from the old sewers. Decorative crowns which originally sat atop each pipe have been lost or stolen and paintwork has faded and peeled. Cllr I L Shepherd-Dubey has requested that WTC considers repairing and re-painting these two pipes.

The B&GO said that whilst it is likely they are owned by Thames Water he has been assured that they are not listed among the water company's assets. Therefore, Thames Water would not object to WTC refurbishing them. The B&GO estimated that the cost of this work per pipe is around £500.

Cllrs recognise WTC's role in preserving Wokingham's heritage in the broad sense but did not think this expense could be justified at this time.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

It was mentioned that The Wokingham Society could be approached by Cllr Shepherd-Dubey to ask it to consider paying for the refurbishment of the town's 'stink pipes'.

REVIEW OF RENT CHARGED TO WOKINGHAM HORTICULTURAL ASSOCIATION FOR ITS TRADING STORE AT ORMONDE ROAD ALLOTMENTS SITE (Agenda Item 11)

The support Wokingham Horticultural Association (WHA) gives to the town of Wokingham and the Town Council was acknowledged by councillors.

It was proposed by Cllr N J Cambbell-White and seconded by Cllr T J Lack and it was

**RESOLVED
29873**

to hold the annual rent WHA pays WTC for its trading store at Ormonde Road allotments site at £50.00 per annum for the coming year.

DRINKING POINTS ON MARKET PLACE AND ELSEWHERE (Agenda Item 12)

A copy of Cllr T J Lack's email dated 13th November 2018 and a document from Refill Reading were received and considered.

Councillors acknowledged the benefits of introducing a public drinking fountain by the Town Hall. It was felt that placing it near the existing external tap was a viable option. However, the B&GO said that water from this tap does not fall into either a proper drain or soakaway.

Councillors expressed their disappointment that this drainage issue was not dealt with as part of the recent Market Place improvement works.

The Town Clerk was asked to raise this issue with Balfour Beatty.

ACTION: TOWN CLERK

The B&GO was asked to investigate options for the design and installation of public drinking fountains.

ACTION: BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS OFFICER

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS AND MOTIFS 2018 (Agenda Item 13)

The Chairman said that because of the lateness of the hour he was deferring consideration of the AO's report 03:2018-19 until the next Amenities Committee meeting. However, the AO was instructed to pursue the introduction of residual circuit breakers to WTC's lights and motifs electrical infrastructure where these are not in place.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

He was also instructed to arrange to replace the obsolete Lewden plugs and plug tops used for the lights on the twenty-six small Christmas trees around Market Place.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

AMENITIES COMMITTEE INFORMATION (Agenda Item 14)

Cllr C R George requested that an agenda item about licencing professional dog walkers using WTC parks and open spaces is considered at the next Amenities Committee meeting.

ACTION: AMENITIES OFFICER

The meeting closed at 10:06pm.

CHAIRMAN