

## Marlborough Town Council

### Grounds Managers Report February 2021

#### General

##### Workload

Yet another year has been and gone last year was most definitely not a normal year, but we have soldiered through no two years are the same and I hope that this year things improve for all of us. We are well into winter maintenance throughout the town and are making good progress. We have made a start on the hedges in the cemeteries but have put that on hold for a while to allow for the ground to dry out.

##### Bedding displays

The winter bedding has taken well.

##### Play

Our play areas are still being well used but the recent lock down has led to a reduction in the numbers that normally use the play areas.

Most users are social distancing.

We are sanitising the equipment daily.

With a daily visual check

The equipment inspections are recorded monthly.

The play area at Coopers Meadow is very well used.

##### Wye House play equipment

The wooded play equipment in Wye house has most definitely seen better days.

last summer the equipment was sanded again, and the boards treated with a water sealant to try and prevent the moisture penetrating the boards this has slowed the delamination of the wood but all of the play equipment has started to delaminate now this is an area that we need to look at as the equipment could really do with being replaced

**I would recommend that the committee to add this to the agenda for the next A&OS committee meeting.**

We are continuing to over mark most the football pitches as and when needed although there are currently no fixtures being played it is easier to keep the pitches marked in than to lose them and must start remarking them out again when the fixtures continue.

Some of the pitches are showing signs of wear especially in the goal mouths we will need to do some work on these areas before the football fixtures can resume.

##### Machinery:

Due to the financial impact that the virus has had on the economy we have not ordered any additional equipment for the financial year ahead of us.

As you know we are currently applying for planning permission for a new workshop on the golf course near the green keepers shed.

This is a fantastic opportunity for us to get a good working relationship with the golf course as we have some equipment that they could use and vis versa for example the golf course requires a tractor to power the hollow Tine corer for carrying out the aeration work on the greens. We have a tractor that could be

## ITEM 5

used for such a task but then we do not have a hollow tine that we could use on our football pitches if we can get an agreement for the councillors that would enable us to share equipment with the golf course this could and would be beneficial to both parties all we would need is to make sure that the insurance side of things will be covered.

**I would recommend that the committee that they consider this as this would be a great help to both the golf club and the town council.**

We have taken delivery of a new Husqvarna p524 that we use on a lot of our open spaces this machine was due to be replaced in June but was delayed due to a supply issue and only arrived in late November. The grounds team have made a start on servicing the smaller 2 stroke equipment (Hedge cutters strimmer's blowers and chain saws)

The pedestrian mower and ride on lawn mowers will be serviced by the grounds team this winter ahead of the mowing season.

### Site Specific

#### Salisbury Road Recreation Ground

Since the start of the latest lock down there has been a reduction in the number of people using the recreation ground the play equipment is still being used, we have put several signs around the skate park informing the public that the skate park is closed to which most people observe.

#### St Mary's Church

We are making good progress our winter maintenance in Saint Mary's church yard.

We have reduced some of the shrubs as part of our winter maintenance programme, but some formative pruning will be required in the early spring

#### The Green

The cleaning of the benches will commence in the next couple of weeks.

#### War Memorials

Winter maintenance has been completed.

The roses that were relaced last year are doing well and would benefit from a layer of manure in the next couple of months.

#### The Cemetery

The sides of the hedges in the newer part of the cemetery have been cut and cleared away.

The tops of the hedges will be done when the ground is dry enough.

#### Old Cemetery

The cutting of the yew hedge at the front of the cemetery has been delayed due to the wet ground conditions this will be done before the beginning of March.

## **The Priory**

The priory is still being well used.

Winter maintenance is going well in the priory.

## **Coopers Meadow**

This area is very well used, and the play equipment is very popular with the younger children.

This area is really wet at this time of year this has meant that we have had to limit vehicular access.

## **The Common**

This area is also very well used.

The Main football pitch is showing signs of wear in the goal mouths.

The two smaller areas on the side of frees avenue holding up well.

I will continue to monitor the ground conditions.

## **Manton - Jubilee field**

The installation of the play equipment has had an impact on the way that we maintain the hedge along the side of the park, but we have worked our way around this

Regular visits to empty the bins and check the riverbanks.

The new play area is very popular with the residents of Manton.

## **Wye House Gardens**

The horticultural winter maintenance has been completed in wye house gardens.

We are looking to carry out some essential maintenance on the footbridge over the pond in the next couple of weeks

Yet again we will again be lifting and dividing some of the herbaceous plants again this year to fill in some of the remaining gaps in the borders.

## **Elcot Rec**

We have put a temporary litter bin close to the allotment gate as the old bin was damaging the bags as we were emptying the bins.

Regular litter picking and weekly check around this area.

## **Stonebridge Meadow**

As you can imagine the meadow is very wet at this time of year

This seriously limits what we can do in the meadow especially for vehicular access.

The bins are checked regularly and emptied when required.

we have installed a small section of low knee-high post and rail fence along the back edge of the dipping platform as a matter of health and safety following the summers excavation of the dipping pond

## Churchill Court

**Summary** – The report gives an update around trees and ownership issues at Churchill Court and asks Members to consider how to take the issue forward.

### 1. Historical Background

For some years, the Town Council has owned a small strip of land alongside the River Kennet adjacent to Churchill Court (private residential homes for older people). There was an aspiration to create a public riverside walk along that stretch. The developers at the time, McCarthy & Stone, were obliged (under a S106 Agreement) to provide fencing to allow this to happen (ownership was then passed to Fairhold Homes Ltd which would have taken on this obligation.) A planning application was submitted and approval made for a public riverside walk and metal railings. Background is at:

<http://unidoc.wiltshire.gov.uk/UniDoc/Document/Search/DSA,413206> There was considerable opposition to this from local residents. Permission was granted, but has now expired.

The railings/fencing have never been erected. Management of the retirement homes at the site has changed over the years and it is now being managed by First Port.

Advice was received from the Town Council's solicitors recommending that the land was returned back to the owners. Councillors resolved that the land be passed back to the owners at no purchase price (a nominal £1). Letters sent by our solicitors were not responded to and this was again chased up in 2018. The Town Clerk liaised with the Warden at the site as well as the Area Manager for First Port who passed our request onto the Estates and Management Department. The response was:

***Current owners of the site do not want ownership of this area even at a £1/peppercorn cost.***

Health & Safety Issues - Our Health and Safety Advisers (Ellis Whittam) in the last couple of years have advised us that that the riverbank area should ideally be fenced off and, at the least, warning signage about the riverbank be erected. Signage has since been erected.

### 2. Trees

- Concerns have often been raised by residents about overhanging trees belonging to the Town Council which darken some apartments. This continues. All Town Council-owned trees (around 1500) are regularly and professionally inspected including those at Churchill Court. Works are undertaken as necessary.
- Residents at Churchill Court are asking that the trees are regularly cut back so that they do not block out light to their apartments. First Port and the owners of the site are insisting that this work is the responsibility of the Town Council. (This was most recently re-confirmed by the Area Manager for First Port on 12 November 2020)



Here is an extract from the minutes of the A&OS minutes of 16 November 2020:

**301/20 CHURCHILL COURT**

Members noted a report by the Town Clerk and considered ongoing works to trees at Churchill Court. In addition to those already submitted, letters had been received very recently from two residents. One had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting, the second was read out by the Town Clerk. Discussion points included:

- That one tree had recently been reduced and disappointment that some residents had objected to the work to only that tree when more tree works were required
- One common concern was that trees were blocking light into residents' apartments
- In the past the Grounds Team had cut back overhanging branches as a goodwill gesture but, could only undertake certain works. Tree surgeons would be required for other types of work and there was a question of who should pay for this – the tree budget for the entire town was £3,000. There needed to be a clear policy on what tree works the Council would take responsibility for at Churchill Court
- That the Town Council had previously agreed to the recommendation of its health and safety advisers to erect signage – warning signage had since been erected
- The riverbank was about 8-10 feet from the ground floor flats, with a 4' drop to the river – a liability that rested with the Town Council
- Fencing costs had already been identified (around £3,500), but estimates would need to be updated
- Whether, if the proposed fence was to be erected, the Town Council should then cut back any overhanging trees
- That a fence could be of post and rail type in order to allow residents a continued view of the river
- That the owners of Churchill Court had no interest in taking over the ownership of the riverbank and did not appear willing to meet the costs of tree works which would benefit their residents
- Some sympathy with residents' concerns as maintenance costs would likely be passed on to the residents
- Where there had been a risk of damage to the building, the Town Council had arranged for trees to be cut back in the past
- Whether there was any obligation for the Town Council to cut back trees to provide light
- The trees were inspected by an arboriculturist in line with the Town Council's tree inspection and maintenance schedule
- Although approaches had been unsuccessful in the past, whether to try once more to arrange a meeting with the owners of Churchill Court
- Whether to delay any other decisions on the trees until a meeting had taken place with the owners

**RESOLVED:** to approach the owners of Churchill Court to arrange a meeting to discuss all issues and defer any other decisions pending the outcome of this meeting

### 3. Update

Again, current managers and owners of the site do not want ownership of this area even at a £1/peppercorn cost.

Residents at Churchill Court have contacted the Town Clerk on a number of occasions since the November A&OS meeting reiterating their stance on the trees. It has also been reported by one resident that walking in the garden is now difficult due to tree roots.

### 4. Points to Note:

- As owners of the land adjoining the river, the Town Council has duties. Not simply, riparian owners' duties, but also potential liability issues. There is also a retaining wall and an old disused gas pipe (stretching across the river and ending up on the strip of land). There is a steep and unprotected drop from the river's edge too. Currently any liability on this owned riverside stretch rests with the Council. Members may want to re-consider whether to erect a fence to mark the boundary
- Tree works as recommended by the professional arboriculturist are carried out on trees belonging to the Council at Churchill Court – it is not clear if there is an obligation on the Council to regularly cut them back to provide light to the adjacent property

### 5. Financial Implications

Some works to trees can be carried out by the Grounds Team (and has been done in the past), but some need a professional tree surgeon which comes at a charge. The balance of budget for works to Town Council-owned trees (1500 trees) is £1410.00. The budget for 2021/22 is £15,000.

### Town Clerk's Recommendation

The Town Clerk recommends that Members consider:

- i) How to take forward requests for ongoing Town Council tree maintenance responsibility at Churchill Court
- ii) With further confirmation from the owners that the position has not changed and they still do not wish to own the riverbank, whether to now go ahead and erect a fence for health and safety reasons.

**Town Clerk**

**28 January 2021**

**Plume of Feathers Garden**

**Summary** - To note a report by the Town Clerk and consider a request by the Richmond Fellowship and local residents about future community use of the garden and also to agree to emergency cabling works to take place at Plume of Feathers Lane.

**1. Background**

Plume of Feathers Garden is currently under lease to the Richmond Fellowship (a leading national mental health charity and one of the largest voluntary sector providers of mental health support in the UK). The lease expires on 22 October 2021.

The Town Clerk met with the Director of the Fellowship and local residents to informally discuss the future use of the garden via video conference on 22 January 2021. The Fellowship and local residents are keen to work together through a Friends Group to retain the space as a community garden for use by the public. A letter requesting this is at **Appendix 1**.

**2. Legal and Financial Implications**

The lease is based on a peppercorn rent. Legal advice would need to be sought about issuing a new lease to the Fellowship with clauses to reflect the interest of the Friends Group.

**3. Points to Note**

- Plume of Feathers Garden is recommended to be given the status of Valued Community Open Space in the draft Neighbourhood Plan

**4. Works by Open Reach**

The Town Council has been asked to grant permission for access to Plume of Feathers Lane (leading to Plume of Feathers Garden) for urgent works to damaged cabling. This damage seems to be next or close to a water metre. As this is in the ownership of Marlborough Town Council, Members are asked to grant permission. Surfacing will be made good on completion and Open Reach will be informing local residents.

**Town Clerk's Recommendation**

The Town Clerk recommends that Members consider:

- i) The request for taking the Plume of Feathers Garden forward as a community garden, managed by the Richmond Fellowship and a Friends Group
- ii) Agreement to granting access to Open Reach for urgent works at Plume of Feathers Lane.

**Town Clerk**

**28 January 2020**

## **Update on Revised Skatepark Floodlighting Proposal**

**Summary** – This report asks members to agree a way forward in terms of a revised lighting scheme at the skatepark.

### **Background**

At a meeting of Full Council on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020, Members noted a report by the Assistant Town Clerk and considered a recommendation to make amendments to the project for lighting the skatepark at the Recreation Ground, Salisbury Road.

RESOLVED: to work with the lighting contractor on a revised skatepark lighting scheme using 4m columns and that the project going ahead under permitted development rights be confirmed by the Planning Officer.

### **Current Situation**

The Assistant Town Clerk submitted a request to Wiltshire Council in December 2020, to check the eligibility of this revised application under permitted development rights. A response is still pending.

In early January, a site visit was held with Luminance Pro, the chosen contractor for the original scheme, to look at a new proposal using 4m lighting columns. This revised design shows that the design lux levels and obtrusive light values on the new houses, now adjacent, have been kept very low with the application of the lower columns and the inclusion of 4 sided deflectors. Design calculations also show compliance with the more stringent criteria that you would find for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

A copy of the revised proposal is attached at **Appendix 1**.

### **Financial Implications**

The original proposal was costed at £13,685.00 + VAT.

The revised quotation includes an increase in the number of lamp columns from 3 to 5, an increase in LED luminaires from 3 to 6 and 4 x new light deflectors to mitigate light spill to neighbouring residential dwellings. This additional equipment has had an impact on the cost which has increased to £15,410.00 + VAT.

As with the original quotation, there will be additional costs for the hire of site security (Heras fencing) however this will be sourced locally to keep costs down (in the region of £450 for a 4 week period). Having factored in a 10% contingency to allow for unforeseen circumstances there is a potential increase on the original proposal of approximately £3,500.

£10,000 has been allocated to this project from CIL contributions and £5,000 of grant funding has already been secured from the Wiltshire Council Local Youth Network. A balance of £4,322 remains in the in the skatepark/youth council earmarked reserve. So, a total of £19,322 is available for this project.

### **Recommendation**

Members are requested to consider the revised quotation and agree that we proceed with this project on this basis, subject to Wiltshire Council approval.

**Author – Assistant Town Clerk**

**26<sup>th</sup> January 2021**