



Marlborough Town Council Amenities & Open Spaces Committee

Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of the **Amenities & Open Spaces Committee** which was held on **Monday, 22 November 2021** in the Court Room, Marlborough Town Hall at 8.15pm

PRESENT: Donald Heath Chairman
Councillor Mark Cooper Town Mayor
Councillor Andrew Ross
Councillor Noel Barrett-Morton
Councillor Jo Waltham
Councillor Caroline Thomas

ALSO

PRESENT: Richard Spencer-Williams Town Clerk
Nigel Weatherly Grounds Manager
Belinda Richardson Tourism Officer
Dawn Whitehall Administrator
Plus 1 member of the public

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Richard Pitts – congratulated the Town Council on its policy asking people to wear masks when moving around the Town Hall in order to counteract the airborne spread of Coronavirus.

Speaking on behalf of Transition Marlborough, he noted that on page 4 of the Habitat report for the Common that it recommends the additional pitch should be sited parallel to Free's Avenue in line with the other pitches if it is absolutely necessary. Also, that it recommends in the same section several habitat enhancements be undertaken to offset the loss of biodiversity. In this climate crisis we find ourselves, we ask:- Will the committee please ensure that sufficient budget be allocated, in the closed session of the meeting tonight, for this work to be undertaken? Transition Marlborough would also be willing to assist in supporting the Council in searching and applying for grants to improve biodiversity in the town. The **Chairman** confirmed that it would take account of budget requirements.

Finally Mr Pitts asked to engage the town in assisting a citizen science study of fruit trees which was feeding information to a University of Reading study.

Val Compton was unable to attend in person but asked through the Town Clerk: "Would the Town Council consider substituting a more inclusive "annual flower-

based series of events” which residents as well as visitors could enjoy, rather than entering the Southwest in Bloom competition, as explained in Steps 1,2 and 3 of the paperwork (*of a document supplied*)?”.

Members suggested this might fit well with a working party to be created to focus on events to mark the 2022 Queen’s Jubilee.

ACTION POINT: The Town Clerk agreed to circulate the document to Members.

ACTION POINT: to invite Mrs Compton to present her ideas to a future meeting.

292/21 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from **Councillor Hillier**.

293/21 DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations.

294/21 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

295/21 MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held 31 August 2021 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman

296/21 TOWN CLERK’S ACTION LOG

Members noted the Action Log report. There were verbal updates to actions, and discussion points included:

- Savernake Crescent, St Margaret’s Mead, the Community Orchard and Marlborough St Mary’s were among locations suggested for the planting of trees to mark HM Elizabeth II’s Platinum Jubilee. **Councillor Thomas** agreed to make enquiries within Wiltshire Council about other suitable residential green areas.
- A price of £309.56 had been obtained following a request for a bin at Wiltshire Council’s footpath MARL1 and the junction with Manton Hollow. This would be clearly marked with the Town Council’s crest. As there was budget available within the 2021-22 it was agreed to go ahead.
- **Councillor Barrett-Morton** asked whether **Councillor Thomas** could follow up with Wiltshire Council on a request to deal with ivy which was beginning to smother mature trees in the Polly Gardens car park

RESOLVED: that the purchase of a waste bin at a cost of £309.56 to be placed at the junction of footpath MARL1 and Manton Hollow was approved

ACTION POINT: **Councillor Thomas** to investigate Wiltshire Council green spaces that might be suitable for planting trees to mark the Queen’s Jubilee

297/21 GROUND MANAGER’S REPORT

Members noted the Ground Manager’s report and there were a number of questions and comments arising:

- The lack of a seasonal worker this year had affected the team's ability to cover all areas of the town and some work was slightly behind the usual annual schedule as a result. Key areas were being prioritised leaving smaller, less central areas to be addressed as winter projects.
- The Town Clerk was regularly updated about any equipment needs for the team. Members reiterated that they wanted the team to have the best equipment possible for the job.
- One result of the break-in at the workshop had been an opportunity to replace diesel equipment with cleaner, battery powered tools where practical. This was good news in terms of meeting the Town Council's climate obligations and Members felt it should be well publicised. A future requirement might be the purchase of additional battery packs to avoid downtime.

Mr Weatherly was congratulated on an excellent report.

The Grounds Manager left the meeting

298/21

TOWN SIGNS

Members noted the Tourism Officer's report and she provided a verbal overview. Questions, comments and feedback included:

- Whether to incorporate AONB standard logos and lettering, perhaps with some sponsorship
- That other relevant brands would be included, e.g. Great West Way
- Whether to improve signage to open spaces, especially from the High Street
- A request for any replacement 'welcome to Marlborough' signs to include the 1204 Charter date
- Whether to delay design decisions until more work had been done to agree a 'brand Marlborough' design

RESOLVED: (i) that the Committee supports the Tourism Officer's approach and

RESOLVED: (ii) that the Tourism Officer should work with the evolving 'branding' proposals to be recommended by the Finance & Policy Committee

The Tourism Officer left the meeting

299/21

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE PROTECTION POLICY

Members considered the Environment and Climate Protection Policy (ECP) and how it could positively influence activities and services within the Committee's remit:

- Every decision should be made in line with the policy, for example when purchasing new equipment
- To designate **Councillor Waltham** as the Committee's climate champion to ensure sufficient account is taken of environmental or climate impacts of any future decisions

- To include ECCP considerations in reports and recommendations

RESOLVED: that all decisions of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee will take account of sustainability and environmental impact

300/21

WYE HOUSE GARDENS PLAY AREA

Members considered the update report and likely costs to upgrade the toddlers play equipment with similar equipment. Matters arising included:

- Whether a play area was required at all
- That a recent meeting of an open spaces working party had proposed or recommended:
 - the area to be designated as a 'quiet area' with more trees and seating
 - the designation of different areas within the town for the use of specific groups
 - to conduct a survey and explore ideas
- That this was the only play area specifically for very young children
- That prior to the Covid-19 pandemic local nurseries had routinely brought children to Wye House Gardens to play. This had stopped partly due to the pandemic, and partly due to the poor state of the equipment
- Whether other play areas, e.g. that to be developed at Rabley Wood, or existing sites at Coopers Meadow, Cherry Orchard or the Trim Trail would be suitable alternatives for previous users
- It was believed that the design for Rabley Wood would not take account of the needs of children with disabilities or autism
- Whether to consult nurseries about whether they would use an updated toddlers play area
- Whether the amount of use would justify the estimated £50,000 cost of replacing equipment and upgrading the surface
- That Wye House Gardens is a beautiful area and generally very quiet and whether an additional quiet space was needed in the same location
- Agreement about adding more benches to the gardens generally
- Whether the needs of young children could be met more creatively, and at a lower cost, avoiding plastic and without providing a like-for-like replacement
- Whether to create a multi use space with more benches and sensory equipment for children designed to be as accessible as possible for all groups and abilities

RESOLVED: to instruct the Working Party to investigate options to replace the play area at Wye House Gardens with equipment that would be accessible to young children, possibly with a sensory aspect as well as providing additional areas of seating. This proposal should form the basis for consultation with local residents, nursery groups and Marlborough St Mary's parents

Councillor Thomas had taken an action at a previous meeting about the play area at St Johns Park, and confirmed that it was being regularly inspected and maintained.

301/21

DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

Members considered the outcomes of the Development Planning Workshops and whether to adopt thematic aims to develop into actions or projects, as well as budget implications which would be discussed in detail later in the agenda.

Those items the Committee felt would fall within its remit were:

- Climate emergency
- Maximising Marlborough's assets
- Eco-tourism
- Devolution of services
- The Common
- Maintain the existing

RESOLVED: to instruct the Open Spaces Working Party to investigate the financial implications of potential new that could be linked to the development workshops

302/21 ASH TREES ON THE COMMON

Members noted the Grounds Manager's report about trees at Marlborough Common affected by Ash Die Back Disease (*Hymenoscyphus Fraxinus*) and his proposed options to manage them, as well as the financial implications. In particular Members noted the tree surgeon's advice that, if size and condition of the tree allowed, pollarding rather than felling the tree provided an opportunity for it to regenerate so that mature trees would not be lost to felling immediately.

RESOLVED: that the Committee supports the proposed approach for the management of diseased Ash trees at Marlborough Common, with a first preference to pollard trees showing signs of disease where this would not be a danger to the public

ACTION POINT: the Town Clerk to check with the Grounds Manager which trees at the Recreation Ground were included in upcoming tree works

303/21 MEMORIAL BENCH REQUEST

Members considered a request for a memorial bench at Coopers Meadow. Matters arising included:

- Whether to earmark spaces to allocate for benches to meet future requests
- Whether existing benches could be swapped or converted into memorial benches

RESOLVED: that a request for a Memorial Bench at Coopers Meadow is approved if it can be placed in line with existing benches

304/21 CEMETERY REPORT

Members noted recent Grants of Exclusive Rights of Burial issued and approved Memorials and Inscriptions.

305/21 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: that under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and representatives of the press and broadcast media be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted

306/21

COMMITTEE BUDGET 2022-23

Members considered the budget requirements for 2022-23. Two changes to the draft were agreed:

- To increase the A&OS projects budget by £5,000 to allow for biodiversity enhancement/mitigation
- To budget for an additional 0.5 FTE resource to the grounds team

RESOLVED: that the A&OS Committee Budget 2022-23 is approved with two amendments for recommendation to the Finance & Policy Committee

The meeting closed at 8.04 pm

Signed:

Date:

Chairman