

# Marlborough Town Council



## Amenities and Open Spaces Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held Monday,  
10 October 2022 in the Court Room, Marlborough Town Hall at 7pm

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**PRESENT** Councillor Jo Waltham Chair  
Councillor Nicholas Fogg  
Councillor Noel Barrett-Morton  
Councillor Mark Cooper  
Councillor Donald Heath  
Councillor Caroline Thomas

**ALSO**

**PRESENT** Richard Spencer-Williams Town Clerk  
Dawn Whitehall Corporate Services Officer

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### **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions.

**187/22**

### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from the **Town Mayor**.

**188/22**

### **DECLARATIONS**

There were no declarations.

**189/22**

### **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

**190/22**

### **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held 11 July 2022 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair

**191/22**

### **ACTION LOG**

Members noted the updated action log.

#74: Queen's Green Canopy: trees had been ordered and would be planted soon.

**192/22**

### **GROUNDS MANAGER'S REPORT**

Members noted the Grounds Manager's report.

## 193/22 PROJECTS OVERVIEW AND PRIORITIES

Members considered which projects should be priorities in readiness for the precept and budgeting process. Some circumstances had changed since the prioritised projects were agreed in July:

- a joint project with the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT) was now unlikely to proceed in the short term as WWT had put activities on hold
- there was a need to replace vehicles for the Grounds team
- an assumption that upgrading the play area at Wye House Gardens could be funded from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds

For 2023/24 budgeting preparation, an amended list of projects was agreed in priority order:

1. Grounds works vehicle replacements (purchase or lease tbc) 2023-25
2. Cemetery extension (2022-27) – to complete feasibility assessment in 2022-23 and review (will require annual funding allocations to build reserves)
3. Biodiversity management plan (2023-24)
4. Salisbury Road Recreation Ground (2023-24) subject to s106 funds confirmation and/or CIL funds
5. Play area at The Common (2023-24)
6. Training area on The Common (ongoing as needed)
7. Rabley View/land at Tin Pit FiPL application and feasibility (2022-23)

**RESOLVED:** that the priority list of projects is adopted

## 194/22 WYE HOUSE GARDENS PLAY AREA

Members noted a report and considered proposals by the Play Areas Working Party (PAWP) setting out an approach to upgrading the play area at Wye House Gardens.

One play equipment provider had provided an indicative proposal and costings, and this was displayed at the meeting in hard copy format. Others were awaited.

Members discussed the proposal:

- The area would be designed with seating, play and sensory planting and materials in mind: possible examples included a willow tunnel or play hut rather than traditional play equipment
- The area would be aimed at children under 5, although it would also be a calm space for anyone to use
- Costs were anticipated at around £25,000 (half the cost of Coopers Meadow play area)
- The proposed approach would be to issue an invitation to tender
- Whether the upgrade was good value
- Whether the area would get much use; the current equipment was in a poor state leading to it being used infrequently
- The location was close to the High Street and to family homes so would be accessible for families with small children

- Whether new signage would be required
- Whether to hold a launch event to publicise the new area
- Whether to contact interested parties (nurseries, pre-school, junior school parents) to gain feedback
- Whether the scheme was complex enough to warrant the additional expense of employing a project manager
- It was likely that Town Council staff had the capacity to manage the project

**RESOLVED:** that the proposed invitation to tender is agreed, and to request the Finance and Policy Committee to release funds from the CIL Ear Marked Reserve for circa. £30,000

**195/22**

### **NEW CEMETERY**

Members noted the Town Clerk's project update report and considered his recommendations:

- The project was in the early stages, and information, estimated costs and assumptions would likely change as details become clearer over time
- Based on current demand, the potential 0.7-acre plot was estimated to provide cemetery space for the next 20-30 years
- Whether to discourage burials and promote ashes interments, which would take less space and be a more sustainable use of land
- Whether to review the current regulations relating to rights and charges for burials depending on whether the deceased resides within the parish
- Whether, when cemetery fees are next reviewed (usually January), to recommend an increase in line with inflation (for example, by 10%); whether out-of-parish burial rights should continue to be offered, and whether the cost of purchasing a plot (currently x3 the in-parish fee) should be increased
- Whether to communicate that owners of pre-purchased plots can sell the exclusive rights of burial if they believe they will never be used
- General agreement to move forward with the proposed location, noting that no other landowners had been forthcoming when the Marlborough Area Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group had issued a call for sites
- Cost: the Town Council had already set aside an Ear Marked Reserve of £32,000, although at least another £200,000 would be needed. Funding options discussed included adding to the reserve year-on-year, increasing the precept and financing options such as a Public Works Loan: the latter was the preferred option
- A decision on when to consult about a land swap to compensate for the loss of Common land would be required

**ACTION POINT:** Town Clerk to investigate Public Works Loan

**196/22**

### **CLIMATE, ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT**

Members noted the Town Clerk's update report and considered recommendations.

Members discussed whether to create a part-time job for an Officer to take responsibility for climate, environment and biodiversity (estimated at approx.

£15,000 pa) or instead whether to commission a biodiversity audit (estimated at £4,000). At the Full Town Council meeting held 3 October, the Town Council had agreed<sup>1</sup> to keep budgets as low as possible. Therefore Members agreed not to proceed with creating a new role at this time.

**RESOLVED:** to include the commissioning of a service to conduct a biodiversity audit and create a biodiversity plan in the Committee's 2023/24 budget proposal to the Finance & Policy Committee

**197/22 MARLBOROUGH COMMON ACCESS MANAGEMENT**

Members noted works that had been undertaken at Marlborough Common, at a cost to the Town Council of £1,000, to ensure the prevention of unwanted vehicle access to the Common in future.

**198/22 MARLBOROUGH COMMON GOVERNANCE**

Members noted the Town Clerk's report and considered whether to reinstate a working party to oversee the management of Marlborough Common with the needs of various interest groups and Commoners in mind.

**RESOLVED:** to create a Common Working Party (CWP) to review the current arrangements about how the Common is managed, and to report back to the Committee with its recommendations and findings

**Councillors Fogg, Barrett-Morton and Waltham** agreed to join the CWP along with Town Council Officers.

**199/22 WYE HOUSE GARDENS ACCESS**

Members considered signage and public access to Wye House Gardens:

- Whether signs related to private areas belonging to Wye House could give the wrong impression that the public were not allowed in the gardens
- Whether to hold a celebratory event in the gardens linked to the opening of the upgraded play area
- Whether to hold events for the elderly in the gardens
- Whether to publicise that the gardens are open to all, and invite the public to pick the apples from the Community Orchard trees
- Whether a new, more prominent sign, at a cost of approximately £100, should be purchased for the gate

**RESOLVED:** to purchase a new sign for the entrance to Wye House Gardens  
*Councillor Barrett-Morton left the meeting*

**200/22 BUDGET 2023/24**

Members noted the A&OS budget report for quarter 3 and considered the requirements for 2023/24. The Town Clerk provided an updated budget sheet as there had been an error in the document distributed with the agenda. Each line was

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<sup>1</sup> Min. No. 181/22 **RESOLVED:** that, with the cost-of-living pressures in mind, the Town Council intends to increase the precept by the absolute minimum necessary for the Council to achieve a balanced budget and fulfil its responsibilities to residents in 2023-24, and for the Council and its Committees to plan their priorities for 2023/24 with this in mind

reviewed, and several changes were agreed and noted by the Town Clerk. Key discussion points included:

- Agreement in principle to the suggestion by the Chair of the Finance & Policy Committee to move duplicate line items from Committee budgets to centralised budgets, where the Committee had no control over the spend e.g. business rates, legal fees etc
- To consolidate certain duplicated line items (e.g. individual vehicle maintenance budget lines into a single budget line)
- Whether to clarify the current EMRs with clear descriptions
- When annual charges are reviewed (usually January) whether to agree set amounts or inflation-linked % increases for 2023/24 fees (e.g. hiring open spaces)
- To reduce the budget for bedding plants by 50%
- To use the CCTV EMR for CCTV in Coopers Meadow (where the play area had incurred significant costs to replace equipment damaged by vandalism)
- To create a new budget line for play area upgrades/CIL/s106 projects
- To create a new budget line for a biodiversity audit (agreed above in 196/22)

**ACTION POINT:** the Chair asked the Town Clerk to provide a report to a future meeting to list all the play areas, date when the equipment was last replaced, expected lifespan and estimated costs of upgrade/replacement

**RESOLVED:** (i) that the restructuring of some budget lines was agreed

**RESOLVED:** (ii) that, with changes agreed at the meeting, the 2023/24 budget requirements for Amenities & Open Spaces be proposed to the Finance & Policy Committee

**201/22 CEMETERY REPORT**

Members noted approved Grants of Exclusive Rights of Burial that had been issued and Memorial Inscriptions that had been approved.

**202/22 ALLOTMENTS**

There was no verbal update as Councillor Lusson was not present at the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.21 pm

Signed: .....  
Chair

Date: .....