

Marlborough Town Council



Amenities and Open Spaces Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee held Monday, 15 January 2024 in the Council Chamber, Marlborough Town Hall at 7pm

PRESENT	Councillor Mark Cooper	Chair
	Councillor Andrew Ross	
	Councillor Noel Barrett-Morton	
	Councillor Lisa Farrell	Vice Chair
	Councillor Mark Luson	
	Councillor Susannah O'Brien	
	Councillor Emily Trow	
	Richard Spencer-Williams	Town Clerk
	Dawn Whitehall	Corporate Services Officer

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no members of the public present.

387/23 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from **Councillor Sheppard**, the **Town Mayor** and the **Grounds Manager**.

388/23 DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations of interest.

389/23 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **Chair** paid tribute to Mike Tupman, Town Crier, who died on Saturday 13 January, and asked for condolences to be passed on to his family. Mike had been an integral part of the Town Council and did an amazing job supporting each Mayor. Mike was passionate about the community he served; public service was in his DNA. On a personal note Mike had been unbelievably kind when the Chair's father passed away.

Referring to the major flood on Friday, 5 January, the Chair thanked staff for everything they did on the day and afterwards to help residents.

390/23 MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held 9 October 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair

391/23 ACTION LOG

Members noted the updated action log. Verbal updates included:

#187 – Community Centre car park: the Deputy Town Clerk was investigating options for vehicle barriers, and a report would be presented to the next A&OS meeting

#188 – CCTV at Community Centre: currently investigating whether there was a suitable pole at the skate park to mount a camera. A report would be prepared for the next A&OS meeting

#208 – litter bin at Recreation Ground: Members noted the steel bin to be fixed to the ground and located in sight of CCTV to discourage further bin fires

Although not on the agenda to consider, Members proposed that another bin be purchased to be located adjacent to a bench. The Town Clerk advised that the purchase price was approximately £500, and as this had not been included in the budget there may be a delay in purchasing one.

RESOLVED: to purchase an additional bin to be located next to a bench at The Recreation Ground (budget dependent)

392/23 GROUNDS MANAGER'S REPORT

Members noted the Grounds Manager's report. Comments and questions arising included:

- Whether more attention could be paid to the general upkeep of The Recreation Ground, to the same magnificent standard as other open spaces. For example, clippings to be removed from the ground after tree and hedge trimming, and footpaths regularly swept clear of debris.
- Whether anything could be done about dog waste and broken glass at Marlborough Common, especially at the football pitch used by Marlborough Youth Football Club, where volunteers had to clear the area of dog waste and litter prior to matches.
- Whether there was a clear understanding of the responsibilities of both partners (Action for the River Kennet (ARK) and Marlborough Town Council) in all aspects of managing Stonebridge Meadow. Although annual management plans were agreed, there had been occasions when questions had arisen that weren't covered by the plan, or where there was no clear decision on whether either party had a casting vote (e.g. around tree works). This could place the Grounds Manager in a difficult position, for example when ARK's view differed from the Town Council's agreed tree plan. It had been several years since the Committee had discussed the management plan, and it was agreed to review the management agreement as well as representation at management meetings at the next A&OS meeting to allow for a full discussion.

ACTION: check whether there was adequate and prominent dog fouling signage at Marlborough Common

ACTION: add a review of the Stonebridge Management Agreement to the next A&OS agenda

393/23 TREE REPORT

Members noted the updated tree report, and recent actions that had been completed.

394/23 FINANCE REPORT

Members noted the Finance Report for month 8 with no questions arising.

395/23 WYE HOUSE GARDEN PLAY AREA

The Town Clerk gave a verbal update on progress, which had been hampered by prolonged wet weather. The area had been levelled, fencing had been erected short of two sections by the gate, and the play equipment had been installed. Sleepers were on site ready for the Grounds Team to build planters and seating when workload and conditions allowed.

The **Chair** passed on the Committee's thanks to the team.

396/23 WORKSHOP EXTENSION

The Town Clerk gave a verbal update on progress. Phase 1 was the erection of a storage barn to the side of the existing workshop. The barn has been constructed off site and a meeting was scheduled to agree the details for it to be assembled on site.

397/23 SMALL TREE PLANTING AT COLLEGE FIELDS AND BARTON PARK

Members noted the Town Clerk's report and a request by Transition Marlborough and Marlborough Community Orchard applying to Wiltshire Council to plant 8 apple trees on open space at Barton Park and College Fields. Discussion points included:

- The request was to plant 8 Wiltshire varieties of apple tree in three locations (Golding Avenue/MacNeice Drive; Farrar Drive; Morris Road/College Fields)
- The land was part of Wiltshire Council's estate, so permission would be required from Wiltshire Council should the Town Council support the application
- A previous application had been granted in 2012. However Wiltshire Council's policy had changed since then. This would mean that for trees planted now, the preferred route was for the freehold of the land to be transferred to the Parish Council, including the surrounding open space. Maintenance responsibilities would therefore fall to the parish council, removing the land from any Wiltshire Council grounds maintenance contracts in place
- Marlborough Town Council would need to agree to the additional workload for the Grounds Team if it supported the application to plant the trees – around 4.5 acres which would require mowing, tree works and general maintenance. Estimated additional workload was approximately 15 days per annum for 1 member of staff, at a cost of £2,100

- Members would need to consider additional indemnity risks associated with trees (falling branches, injuries, damage to property)
- Members expressed surprise to learn that although the application was still pending, some trees had already been planted at the locations by the community group volunteers. Although well meaning, Members considered the trees shouldn't have been planted without first obtaining permission
- The Community Orchard volunteers did a good job with annual maintenance of existing trees. However should their volunteer base change, this work would fall to the Town Council staff as the trees would need ongoing husbandry
- Whether supporting this application after the fact would set a dangerous precedent, encouraging others to plant trees with the Town Council being obliged to maintain them
- The land owner, Wiltshire Council, would need to decide what would happen to the trees that had already been planted if the Town Council did not support the application and by implication, agree to the additional devolution of land maintenance and associated costs
- If approved by the Town Council, it would be expected to accept the additional costs with no extra finance coming from Wiltshire Council. Any shortfall in the budget would need to be covered by increasing the precept to council tax payers

RESOLVED: that Marlborough Town Council does not support the application to plant 8 Wiltshire varieties of apple tree at locations in Barton Park and College Fields as the actions already taken prevented the Town Council from following policy regarding financial commitments

Members noted the decision had been taken because of the lack of the correct process being followed and the associated implications about devolved workload and financial implications. The Town Council would of course continue to consider tree applications, taking each one on its own merit.

398/23 CEMETERY REPORT

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

399/23 ALLOTMENTS

Although unable to attend the most recent meeting of the Allotment Association (AA), **Councillor Lusson** reported:

- Stonebridge allotment holders had mostly recovered from the 'great flood of 24'
- At the AGM it had been noted that Thames Water was sponsoring a programme to provide water butts to allotment sites. The Town Council's agreement to this would be requested
- The Town Council office had agreed to hold discount cards for those AA members who hadn't already collected them

Discussion points included:

- To ascertain how many people were on the waiting list
- When large plots were given up there were options to split them into smaller plots, allowing more people to take up allotments
- Whether there were people who had more than one allotment, and whether this was fair

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm

Signed:

Date:

Chair