

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

The minutes of a meeting of the Amenities and Recreation Committee held in the Old Abbey House on Wednesday 28th August 2013 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillor Marilyn Badcock - Vice-Chairman
Councillor Alice Badcock
Councillor Julie Mayhew-Archer
Councillor Jan Morter
Councillor Andrew Todd
Councillor Samantha Bowring - Mayor
Councillor Lesley Legge

In Attendance: Mrs. Sandra Hill - Deputy Town Clerk –items A17/18
Mr. Stephen Rich - Head of Service Delivery (Clerk)
Mr. Nigel Warner - Town Clerk - item A20

A14 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sandy Lovatt, Leader of the Council, Councillor Helen Pighills (Chairman) and Councillor Jeanette Halliday.

A15 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest raised at this point in the meeting.

A16 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

Resolved: *that the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd May 2013 be signed as a correct record by the Chairman.*

A17 **Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the Agenda**

- **A13 - MG Garden** - Members were informed that the Town Council's part of the project was now complete and the Council was now waiting for the MG Car Club to install information boards around the garden. Members asked if it was possible to see the new information boards in draft form before they were installed.
- **A11 – Fisheries** - See also confidential appendix.

Members also reported that there was night fishing occurring on the Fisheries which was against the regulations and should be policed.

Members were informed that there was one Water Keeper and this task was undertaken for a modest honorarium towards their expenses. It was **resolved** that *consideration of this matter be brought forward to a future meeting.*

A18 **Summer Events Working Group**

The Committee received the minutes of the Summer Events Working Group held on 15th May and 20th August 2013. The Chairman of the Summer Events Working Group updated the Committee on the plans for 2014 and informed the meeting that the next Fun and Music in the Park event would take place on Saturday 7th June 2014.

Members asked how much staff time was taken in the organising of this event. The Deputy Town Clerk informed the meeting that she had personally worked 70 hours in her own time and without payment, over and above the work undertaken during her normal working hours, to ensure the event was a success. The Committee asked that the Summer Events Working Group look into the staff workload that is undertaken for this event.

Members also asked if it was possible to hold the Fun in the Park and Music in the Park on to different days, as the events were distracting people from going into the town centre for shopping. The Deputy Town Clerk informed the meeting that there was a lot of work undertaken to get these events up and running. Holding them on different days would increase both costs and workload. A Member stated that many people attending the events did not go beyond the park in to the town centre; however other members of the Committee felt that these events did bring people into the town centre.

The Committee **resolved** to *approve the recommendations within the minutes.*

A19 **Abingdon in Bloom 2013**

The Committee received the report of the Head of Service Delivery regarding the Abingdon in Bloom displays around the town. The Committee were delighted with the flower displays this year, in particular with the beds which had been transferred from the District Council.

The Chairman asked the Mayor if she would write to Mr Chris Ford of Wick Farm Nurseries, thanking him for the effort he had put in to all the flower displays. The Mayor agreed to write to Mr Ford.

Councillor Jan Morter said that the Council owed a “huge debt of gratitude” to Mr Ford and also the Works Team in ensuring that the flower displays were maintained to a very high standard. The Committee agreed with this and the Works Team would also be written to.

The Vice-Chairman, Cllr Marilyn Badcock, said that the Abingdon In Bloom competition had received a very poor response once again this year. Due to unforeseen commitments

of Councillors, the judging had not taken place until second week in August when it had originally been intended to take place during the first week in July. The Committee were concerned that awards had been given against categories that had not existed on the original entry form. The Committee asked that the Abingdon In Bloom Sub Committee meet to review the results and awards, having regard to the categories advertised; and to arrange a presentation date.

A20 **Budget Estimates 2013 /2014 and Financial Report**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above, as circulated with the agenda.

The Town clerk answered various questions put to him regarding the budget statements in particular regarding the apportionment of staff time in the accounts. The Town Clerk informed the meeting that regulations relating to the accounts had changed and that from 1st April 2010 the Council were not longer subject to the FRSSE (Financial Reporting Standard for Small Enterprises). Consequent to this, the Council had decided in January 2013 no longer to apportion administrative staff time due to the difficulties in doing this in a meaningful way, and the limited use of the information produced. The Committee **resolved** to approve the report of the Town Clerk.

A21 **Cemetery and Works Supervisor's Report**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Cemetery and Works Supervisor, as circulated with the agenda.

Members asked how many more years of burials could be accommodated in the Spring Road Cemetery before would be full. The Head of Service Delivery informed the meeting that this was something the service review, currently being undertaken, may report on and he would make enquiries in this regard.

The Committee were concerned about the extra amount of work that was required of the Works Team with regard to the extra watering of flower displays and weed-killing that had been taken on from the County and District Councils. The Head of Service Delivery said he would report to the next meeting on this matter.

It was **resolved** that the Cemetery and Works Supervisors report be approved.

A22 **Works Team Apprentices**

The Committee considered this matter, see detail of the discussion in the confidential appendix.

The Committee **resolved** to approve the principle of an apprenticeship scheme for the Works Team and to include a bid in the budget estimates exercise for 2014 / 2015.

A23 **Cemetery Matters**

The Head of Service gave a verbal report on events that had recently taken place in the Spring Garden Cemetery. After much discussion the Committee **resolved** that a contingency plan be drawn up in liaison with police and the County Council officers to deal with any large funeral which may require additional resourcing from the local authorities and to make a recommendation for budget consideration. A working Group to be set up consisting of Councillors Alice Badcock, Lesley Legge, the Head of Service Delivery and the Cemetery and Works Supervisor.

Cemetery regulations The Committee were informed that notices had been displayed in the Spring Garden Cemetery for the last two months reminding visitors that glass objects are not permitted in the cemetery and, as from 1st September, they will be removed by Council Staff and stored for six months prior disposal.

It was reported that it was now proposed that attention be given to the children's section where the cemetery regulations have not been complied with or graves have become unattended. Members noted the actions to be taken and asked officers if a letter could be written to the grave owners, at their last known address, before action was undertaken in relation to individual graves. Members and Officers were concerned that this was a sensitive issue and that everything should be done to avoid upsetting relatives.

Fees for burials of persons living outside the parish at the time of death The Committee were informed that there were an increasing number of cases where long standing residents of Abingdon were having to leave the area to receive residential or nursing care. This, under present Council charges, made their estate liable to be charged double for burial costs in the town's cemeteries.

The Committee understood that other councils had encountered similar issues. Some had now changed their rules so that if a resident moved out of the parish they were still entitled to the parish burial charges if they died within a two year period; after that time, double rates were charged.

The Committee discussed the various aspects of this issue and **recommended through the Finance and General Purposes Committee** that the Parish rate for burial in the town's cemeteries should apply up to two years for those leaving the area for residential or nursing care needs. Officers of the Council will have discretionary powers taking into consideration personal circumstances and the final arbiter will be the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Amenities and Recreation Committee (*matter subsequently resolved by Finance and General Purposes Committee*).

The Chairman informed the meeting that an allowance was made in this year's budget for the replacement of the hedge surrounding the Garden of Remembrance in the Spring

Garden Cemetery. It was intended that this work will commence in the autumn and a contractor sought for the installation of railings.

A24 **Ock Valley Walk**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Service Delivery, as circulated with the agenda.

Members were informed that evidence had been found that water voles inhabit the river banks in the Ock Valley Walk. This came to light after a complaint from a member of the Abingdon Naturalists concerning a nearby resident was undertaking ground clearance in the Ock Valley Walk area without permission from the Town Council.

The Committee was told that officers were in touch with the Environment Agency officers and a meeting would be held to discuss management issues in the light of the wildlife found to be present there. Once this meeting had taken place it was **resolved** *a letter would be written to the Brewery Residents Association informing them of the situation and that they should not be undertaking any ground or tree work in the Ock Valley Walk area.*

A25 **Salt Bins**

Members received the report of the Head of Services and taking into account the new guidelines issued by the County Council it was **resolved** *that the following salt bins be purchased and installed:*

- *Cameron Avenue – junction with Radley Road;*
- *Mattock Way – junction with Twelve Acre Drive;*
- *Peachcroft Road – both entrances with Twelve Acre Drive;*
- *Preston Road – junction with Drayton Road (traffic lights.)*

Members also **resolved** *to purchase a salt bin for Swinburne Road – junction with Oxford Road if it met with the County Council's criteria and asked officers to look into this.*

A26 **Publicity**

The Committee considered that the success of this years' Abingdon in Bloom displays should be publicised.

A27 **Items for Next Meeting**

There were no items for the agenda of the next meeting of the Amenities and Recreation Committee other than the reports requested above. Members were asked to submit any items in writing to officers for inclusion on the next agenda.

A28 **Dates of meetings for 2013/2014**

It was noted that the dates for future Amenities and Recreation Committee were:

- Wednesday 20th November 2013
- Wednesday 12 February 2014

A29 **Exclusion of the public, including the Press**

It was moved by the Vice-Chairman and **resolved**

That in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

A29 **Property Matters**

Members received and considered the Confidential Report of the Head of Service Delivery regarding property matters. It was **resolved**: *That a recommendation be made to the Town Council via the Finance and General Purposes Committee to form a working group with regard to Property Matters and in accordance with the confidential report of the Head of Service Delivery.*

A30 **Play areas**

Members received and considered the Confidential Report of the Head of Service Delivery regarding play areas and tenders for equipment. It was **resolved** *that the recommendations within the report be approved and that delegation be passed to the Town Clerk to ensure procurement of the equipment is undertaken.*

The meeting rose at 9.25 pm

Signed Date