

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Amenities and Recreation Committee held in Royse Room, Guildhall on Tuesday 11th June 2019 at 7.00pm.

Present:

Councillor Jim Halliday	Chair
Councillor Charlie Birks	
Councillor Samantha Bowring	Chair Finance & General Purposes Committee
Councillor Grace Clifton	
Councillor Eric de la Harpe	
Councillor Jeanette Halliday	

In Attendance:

Councillor Ulrike Rowbottom

Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk
Mr Stephen Rich	Assistant Town Clerk & Head of Services (Clerk to the meeting)
Mr Timothy Badcock	Cemetery & Works Supervisor

A1. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Andrew Coveney

A2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

A3. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

It was **resolved** the Minutes of the previous meeting on 6th February 2019 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

A4. **Matters Arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda**

Minute A53 – Members were informed that a request had gone out to a professional Arboriculturist to undertake a tree survey.

A5. **Financial Report**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Treasurer / Responsible Financial Officer for the financial year 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019, as circulated with the agenda. The Committee **resolved** to approve the report with a correction to item 2.2 of the report – “309 should read an overspend of £255”.

The Committee also **resolved** to approve the report for the period 1st - 30th April 2019.

A6 **Amenities and Recreation Terms of Reference**

The Committee noted the Terms of Reference as distributed with the agenda.

The Committee **resolved** to appoint a Christmas Lights Sub Committee, membership being Councillors Grace Clifton, Jeanette Halliday and Jim Halliday.

A7. **Cemetery and Works Supervisor’s Report**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Cemetery and Works Supervisor as circulated with the agenda. It was **resolved** to accept the report.

In responding to questions, the Committee was informed that it is Town Council policy to replace trees which were felled.

A8. **Trees**

Members were informed that a complaint had been received from a resident in Baker Road concerning the trees in River Close play area. The trees are large and overhang gardens reducing natural light and making it difficult to grow produce in these areas. The Committee were informed that the trees are reduced / pruned at regular intervals and this is not only costly but also encourages the trees to spread and grow further. The Committee was advised that similar issues were present at the Elizabeth Avenue play area.

The suggestion from officers was to fell the trees and replace with a more suitable trees for the area and to plant them further away from the residents boundary fences. The existing trees would be looked at as part of the upcoming tree survey the Town Council was undertaking.

The Leader of the Council said that the Council should have a policy to give guidelines to Members and Officers on such matters.

The Committee **resolved** to instruct the arboriculturist undertaking the tree survey to take particular note of the problem in these areas and make recommendations. It was suggested that if trees were to be felled this should staggered over successive autumn / winter periods. It was agreed that relevant Ward Councillors would be informed of the situation.

A9. **Street Furniture**

The Committee agreed the Notice Boards in Bath Street, Roysse Court and Market Place should be replaced before the communications review the Council is about to undertake. It was therefore **resolved** to replace the above notice boards and delegation would be given to the Town Clerk and the Chair of Amenities and Recreation to purchase the items, once members of the committee had been advised as what was being proposed and, given seven days to comment on the proposals.

Members were informed that bus shelters in the south of the town had been repainted and cleaned. However, there was one shelter in Preston Road and several in the north of the town that required replacement.

It was **recommended** to purchase three new bus shelters, two for the top of Oxford Road and one for Preston Road, to be funded from the current year street furniture budget (up to £5,000, which is in the competence of the Committee) and the earmarked reserve for street furniture (up to £10,000, referred to Finance and General Purposes Committee). Delegation to be given to the Town Clerk and Chair of Amenities and Recreation to purchase these items once members of the committee had been advised as to what was being proposed and, given seven days to comment on the proposals.

The Committee requested that officers looked into advertising and maintenance contracts for the Council's stock of bus shelters.

A10. **Abingdon In Bloom**

Members discussed the request from the Town Council meeting held on 21st May 2019 that floral displays should be placed at the Reynolds Way precinct.

The Cemetery and Works Manager informed the meeting that there were no spare floral containers and that the team was at full capacity watering and weeding the current displays in the town.

The Assistant Town Clerk / Head of Services informed the meeting that in the coming budget round in November 2019 officers will put forward details for new floral containers to replace the large plastic ones around the town which were now beyond economic repair. However, he suggested some of the plastic containers could be taken to Reynolds Way in the autumn.

It was therefore **resolved** that local Members for the Caldecott Ward (which includes Reynolds Way) would be asked to discuss the upkeep of the containers (including planting and watering) with schools and business and that the Council would transfer some of the containers to Reynolds way in the autumn ready for winter planting.

A11 **New Cemetery**

The Committee were informed that the new cemetery project was originally the responsibility of the Amenities and Recreation Committee, reporting to the Finance and General Purposes Committee (which has responsibility for property transactions). However, in the previous administration the Chair of the Amenities and Recreation Committee was also a Cabinet Member of the Vale of White Horse District Council and had requested that the item be placed under the Finance and General Purposes Committee due to a potential conflict of interest. The matter was therefore transferred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

The Amenities and Recreation Committee considered that the project should be one of its responsibilities as the relevant officers attended the committee and the provision of cemetery services was within its terms of reference. It was noted that the matter would at key points require referral to the Finance and General Purposes Committee due to policy, property and financial implications.

It was **recommended** to the Finance and General Purposes Committee that the administration for the new cemetery project be transferred back to the Amenities and Recreation Committee.

A12. **Cremated Remains**

Officers requested Members to use funding to form an area in the Spring Gardens cemetery in which cremated remains may be scattered, when no longer interred in the Memorial Garden.

It was **resolved** that funding from the cemetery improvement budget for 2019 / 2020 should be used to establish a new area for the scattering of cremated remains.

Members requested officers to look at the issue of scattering ashes, that had not been previously interred in the cemeteries, in the new area and report back to the Committee.

A13. **Closed Churchyard**

It was **resolved** that £1,000 be transferred from the property and equipment budget line 4040 to Pest Control 4114 to record expenditure on pest control in the closed churchyard of St. Helen's church. It was anticipated that this would be an ongoing expenditure.

A14. **Provision of Litter Bins by the Town Council**

The Chair had received requests from various organisations requesting bins on the Market Place should be enclosed with lids. The Committee received a report from officers detailing that the litter problem in the Market Place was not due to the Town Council bins. Officers were requested to contact the District Council concerning the litter problem in the Bury Street shopping centre (aka the Abbey shopping precinct), that was having a knock-on effect in the Market Place, and to ask for improved litter picking and bin emptying.

It was **resolved** not to replace the bins on the Market Place and the Chair agreed to respond to those organisations who had written to the Council.

A15. **Roundabout Islands**

The Committee received a report from Officers concerning the sponsorship and upkeep of roundabouts in Abingdon.

There was some confusion as to who organises sponsorship and there was no clear indication which local authority was responsible for the whole process. South Oxfordshire District Council has an agreement with the County Council for the sponsorship and upkeep of the roundabouts but there is no such agreement with the Vale of White Horse District Council.

It was **resolved** that this should be placed on the agenda of the next Traffic Advisory meeting.

The Leader of the Council said she would raise the matter at their next political group meeting.

A16. **Publicity**

The Committee did not request any items for publicity at this meeting.

A17. **Items for Next Meeting**

Members were informed that they could email officers with items, with an appropriate narrative, for inclusion in future agendas of the committee.

A18. **Date of next Meeting**

Members were reminded that future meetings of the Amenities and Recreation meeting would be held on:

- 4th September 2019
- 27th November 2019
- 26th February 2020
- 10th June 2020

The meeting rose at 9.30pm.

Signed Date
Chair