

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Amenities and Recreation Committee held in Royse Room, Guildhall on Wednesday 4th September 2019 at 7.00pm.

Present:

Councillor Jim Halliday Chair
Councillor Charlie Birks
Councillor Grace Clifton
Councillor Eric de la Harpe
Councillor Jeanette Halliday
Councillor Robert Maddison

In Attendance:

Mr Nigel Warner Town Clerk
Mr Stephen Rich Assistant Town Clerk & Head of Services
 (Clerk to the meeting)

A19. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Samantha Bowring.

A20. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Jim and Jeanette Halliday declared non pecuniary interests in the item concerning allotments as they had relatives and friends who rented allotment sites. This item was presented to the committee as an urgent item during the Finance Report.

A21. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was **resolved** the Minutes of the previous meeting on 11th June 2019 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

A22. Matters Arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda

Minute A53 – Tree Survey currently being undertaken by a professional arboriculturist.

Minute A8 - Elizabeth Avenue and River Close waiting for tree surveys results.

Minutes A9 - Street Furniture - The Committee was informed that two bus shelters had been ordered for the north end of the Oxford Road and should be installed at the end of September 2019. The shelter to be replaced in Preston Road had been put on hold pending the result of the bus service review.

There had been no response from advertising companies regarding bus shelter advertising and maintenance.

Minute A10 – Abingdon In Bloom – Local Members asked to report back to the November Meeting regarding maintenance of floral displays at Reynolds Way shopping area by the community for the 2020 season.

Minute A12 – Cremated Remains – The creation of a garden to accept the scattering of cremated remains would start later this civic year. There are no current facilities in the cemeteries to accept the scattering of cremated remains.

Minute A14 – Provision of Litter Bins by the Town Council – The Chair reported that he had written to the organisations concerning the litter bins in the Market Place and no further response had been received.

Minute A15 – Roundabout Islands – The Committee were informed that the matter had been taken up by the Traffic Advisory Committee and the County Council were asked to report back regarding possible agreements between them and the District Council on roundabout sponsorship and maintenance. Members again expressed their concern about the poor state of the roundabouts in Abingdon.

A23. **Financial Report**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Treasurer / Responsible Financial Officer for the period 1st April 2019 to 31st July 2019, as circulated with the agenda. The Committee **resolved** to approve the report.

The Committee received an urgent request from officers concerning removal of materials on the Westend Allotment site. The Committee was informed that funding was available within the accounts and it was **resolved** that an order be placed for its removal. Officers were asked to write to the other Allotment Associations asking if they had a similar problem and to let the Council know. Also, to inform Allotment Associations that allowing the materials in question on to allotment sites was not permitted and, in future, the Associations would be held responsible for removal of any such items.

A24 **2020 / 2021 Budget Exercise**

The Committee were asked to note that, at the next Amenities and Recreation Committee meeting in November 2019 the 2020 / 2021 budget will be discussed. Members were

asked to consider items they would like included in the 2020 / 2021 budget and to let officers know beforehand so that investigations regarding costs can take place.

A25. **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.

The Committee wished to record their thanks to the Works Team for their work undertaken during the summer months.

A26. **Notice Boards**

The Committee received a verbal report from the Assistant Town Clerk / Head of Services and **resolved** to purchase a notice board for Roysse Court at £1,543 and a double-sided notice board to replace the one in Bath Street at £3,750.

The Committee requested officers to investigate the cost of having a purpose-built round heritage notice board for the Market Place, whilst Members evaluated its proposed siting where the telephone kiosks were, until recently, situated.

A27. **Bench Outside the Abbey Cinema, Guildhall**

It was **resolved** that a bench be installed around the tree outside the Abbey Hall cinema. It was also **resolved** that the new bench have a plaque placed on it dedicated to the late Councillor and Past Mayor Audrey Hasnip.

The Town Clerk and Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames entered the meeting during discussion of this item.

A28. **Planting of New Trees**

Members informed that the Autumn was the time to plant trees and if they had any recommendations for planting, they should let officers know so that the suitability of the area could be assessed.

A29 **"Happy To Chat" Benches**

The Chair moved this item to the start of the agenda to allow Dr Peta Foster to speak and inform the Committee of the "Happy To Chat" benches scheme. Dr Foster informed the meeting that the scheme benefitted senior people who felt lonely and, in turn, helped to improve their mental health. The scheme originally started, in this country, in the Avon and Somerset area and was supported by the police.

Dr Foster informed the committee that, in promoting the scheme, the Council should not choose isolated benches but those where several were located. The benches are identified as “Happy To Chat” benches by notices fixed to them.

The Committee **resolved** to trial the scheme at three areas: Market Place, St Helen’s Wharf and in addition, with the District Council approval, the Abbey Gardens. The scheme would be trialled using laminated signage. If the trial was successful the Council would arrange for permanent signage to be fixed to the benches.

The Committee thanked Dr Foster for attending the meeting.

A30. **Environmental Implications**

The Committee considered environmental implications in relation to matters on the agenda and it was noted that future purchases of vehicles should be of the lowest possible emissions and, if possible, electric vehicles be purchased if up to the requirements of the job.

A31. **Publicity**

The Committee **resolved** that the following could benefit from publicity:

- “Happy to Chat Benches”
- Bench outside Abbey Cinema dedicated to the late Councillor Audrey Hasnip.
- Notice Boards

A32. **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.

A33. **Date of next Meeting**

Members were requested to amend the dates of the Amenities and Recreation Committee from Wednesday to Tuesday evenings to allow the Cemetery and Works Supervisor to attend the meetings. It was **resolved** that future meetings will be held on the following dates:

- Tuesday 26th November 2019
- Tuesday 25th February 2020
- Tuesday 9th June 2020.

A34 **Exclusion of the public, including the press**

The Chair moved:

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.

Items discussed:

1. Cemetery Matters – see confidential appendix..
2. New Cemetery – see confidential appendix.
 - i. *It was resolved that New Cemetery Working Group be established in accordance with the terms of reference outlined in the report, to build a business case for the new cemetery including costs, timetable, risks and need, for consideration by the Council and, if Council agree, to then proceed as outlined in the report.*
 - ii. *That the New Cemetery Working Group be appointed as follows: Councillors Eric de la Harpe, Jeanette Halliday and Jim Halliday.*
3. Pigeons in Town Centre – see confidential appendix.

The meeting rose at 9.00pm.

Signed Date
Chair