

26 Declarations of interest and Requests for Dispensation

The Chairman reminded members of their obligation to disclose any pecuniary interest in items on the agenda. None were declared and no requests for Dispensation received.

27 Questions and representations from Members of the Public

In writing:

1. Janice Montgomery – temporary blockage at Anstey Park and would like to see this a permanent feature but replacement concrete barrier with more attractive planters or bollards
Response: Alton Town Council will review and speak with the tenants of Anstey Park to canvass them for their views on the impact of not having a “through road” and will discuss at the next Open Spaces Committee meeting. The review will take place prior to the completion of the junction works.
2. Claire Loosemore – anti-social behaviour at the Windmill Hill site and the installation of a kissing gate at the Cowdray Park entrance to the site to negate vehicle access of any kind. (The Town Clerk had already responded regarding the anti-social behaviour advising that the police should be contacted via the 101 service).
Response: The committee agreed that additional fencing would be installed adjacent to the kissing gate on the Salisbury Close entrance to the site, but would not be installing a kissing gate at the Cowdray Park entrance to the site and asked the Town Clerk to write to Ms Loosemore to advise of the decision.
3. Roger Smith – Top field at Anstey Park (known locally as Diggers) – one mower width less around the perimeter be left uncut for wildflowers
Response: The Committee agreed that as Anstey Park is a utility recreational facility for junior sport they believed that the suggestion could lead to the area becoming a “dog toilet” and therefore the current regime for cutting the grass is to remain.
4. Karen Murrell Chair of Dementia-friendly, Alton seeking approval to utilise the Public Gardens to be developed with them (and for them) so that they could have small groups of people with dementia and their carers enjoying the outside space.
Response: There are already facilities within the Public Gardens including a sensory garden and Parterre Garden and asked that the Town Clerk further explore the concept with Dementia-friendly Alton.
5. Mrs Babling – raising concerns about the state of the paths at Flood Meadows especially at the Tanhouse Lane end of the site inviting councillors to walk the paths to gain an understanding of just how uneven they are making negotiation difficult for people with travellers.
Response: The Committee were very aware of the on-going issues of the paths in Flood Meadows and were currently in discussions in respect of all of the paths in Flood Meadows with a number of councillors looking into the issue.
6. Tanya Applegath enquired as to the frequency of clearing the weir at Kings Pond.
Response: The Weir is checked twice weekly and cleared on a regular basis as required. The grounds team also removed all of the detritus adjacent to the weir on the bank (which is left in situ to allow it to drain to allow the invertebrates to go back into the water) two weeks ago. Until recently the Environment Agency used to undertake this activity but due to

budgetary constraints and in an effort to reduce their carbon footprint requested that Alton Town Council undertake the activity and assume responsibility to clear.

Councillor Cristofoli interjected and circulated photographs to councillors which he had taken on 31st May and then again on 4th June following his undertaking clearance of the Weir which he believed had been key to water levels decreasing.

Councillor Ginny Boxall advised that when she had visited recently there was lot of pollen from the trees floating on the river which had recently exacerbated the issue at the Weir.

Councillor Graham Hill believed that it was clear that further guidance was required from the Environment Agency and the Committee agreed that the Town Clerk should write and request their further guidance on a clearing regime of the Weir and possibly a site visit.

28 Lions Bench

A request had been received from Sarah O'Donoghue on behalf of the Alton Lions Club seeking permission for the installation of a bench (similar to that already installed at The Butts) on one of the council's open spaces. Sarah addressed the Committee explaining that the Lions bench installed at The Butts was very much loved and well used and supporters have provided additional funds to allow a second bench, but without ornate carved arms to be installed. Their first choice was Flood Meadows, second choice Anstey Park but they particularly did not want it on one of the new developments or on the edge of town. Further suggestions of Barley Fields or Holybourne were not considered by The Lions to be suitable locations.

On the proposal of Councillor Graham Hill, seconded by Councillor Ginny Boxall it was

**RESOLVED to
Approve the installation of a Lions Bench at Anstey Park
towards Diggers**

29 Current Projects

The Committee received updates on current projects underway:

29.1 **Will Hall Farm – Lower Field**

Members had received a copy of the draft contract prior to the meeting as this remains commercially sensitive until the transfer is completed. Several matters are still to be determined which specifically relate to the approved landscaping scheme for the site, riparian responsibilities for the river and the western boundary mapping. The Town Clerk confirmed that the commuted sum from the Miller Homes development must be used in the creation of new public open space for the town.

On the proposal of Councillor Susie Burns, seconded by Councillor Paul Crossley it was

**RESOLVED to
Approve the transfer of the land known as the “Lower
Field” at Will Hall Farm delegating authority to the Town
Clerk to complete the negotiations to finalise the**

documentation with HCC legal to resolve the outstanding items prior to completion.

29.2 **King's Pond** (including Paths)

Representations from the Public - Mr David Dodd

Asked whether the Council as a whole was going to apologise to the residents of Alton for allowing the deterioration of Kings Pond into what was now a perilous danger for the cygnets with only 1 of this year's surviving.

Response: Councillor Susie Burns advised that it was a struggle with balancing human intervention with nature's needs and that nature works in mysterious ways. The Town Council cannot be blamed for the death of the cygnets as the Agenda report papers explain.

Councillor Gideon Cristofoli stated the pond was in a dreadful state with a greater loss in numbers of the bird population this year than that of previous years. Alton Town Council needs to dedicate more time to open spaces and meet more regularly in respect of Flood Meadows and Kings Pond. The Management Plans were drawn up in 2017 and not all of the recommendations made had been implemented including a maintenance regime for the pond. Councillor Cristofoli said he would apologise for the current state of the pond.

Councillor Susie Burns stated that the past cannot change, but the committee can only lend its support going forward and a review of the Management Plan would take place later this year.

Councillor Graham Hill added that there is a lot of history in respect of Kings Pond and agreed that "we can only influence going forward", with a new committee who are committed. A comment fully endorsed by Councillor Ginny Boxall who added that councillors are passionate about Kings Pond, but corrected that it is not a stand-alone pond but has the river running through it which adds to the complexities.

2. Luath Grant Ferguson

Stated he agreed the Council need to look forward and look at the process. Many years ago (in fact 50 years to the day he was a councillor for the Alton Urban District Council) there were similar problems at the pond then to those of today. Council needs to look not just at the trees but the water area is closely related to the banks and it is a sophisticated space. Believes councillors need to consider whether a sub-committee should be considered to take on daily observations/water levels/sluice/trees and this group could include volunteers. Kings Pond offers a lot to the town and Alton Town Council are doing so much good in so many ways. Friends of Kings Pond is the vision for who could take on the activities outlined.

Councillor Gideon Cristofoli asked that it be noted that volunteers are not coming forward as the council needs the right approach – engage and give them a voice and influence from the outside.

Councillor Ginny Boxall made a plea to all those attending the meeting (Councillors and members of the public) to come along to the BioBlitz event at Kings Pond on Saturday 26th June

Paula Langley – Four years ago a lot of money was spent on an amazing report being produced for Kings Pond which set out very clear objectives. Nothing has been done and we are back to square one. How can the public regain trust in the Council?

In bringing public speaking on this item to a close the Chairperson, Councillor Suzie Burns encouraged everyone to come to the BioBlitz event at Kings Pond on 26th June.

29.2.1 **Mink Traps**

The Committee noted the report as tabled. Councillor Cristofoli asked what action was going to be taken but it was commented that without any evidence of the presence of mink, traps cannot be set out. Cllr Burns requested that the experts at BioBlitz be asked if they can observe any evidence.

NOTED

29.2.2 **Paths**

Responses to the invitation to tender for additional path works at Kings Pond had been received with two companies submitting Tenders. Both submissions were compliant with the brief which provided for a 2.5% retention fee over a 12-month period. Councillor Cristofoli asked that the retention fee be raised to 20 – 25% but given this was not in the tender and given both the value of the contract, this remained unaltered.

On the proposal of Councillor Susie Burns, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill it was

RESOLVED to
Approve Blakedown to carry out the work at a cost of
£6,963.97 ex VAT

29.2.3 **Banks**

Members had received details of costs associated with carrying out bank repairs to feeding station 2, a 25m stretch on the railway line side and a number of small infills around the edge of the pond. Given the indicative costs involved which totalled £37,300 and the other works already approved at the site the Committee were unable to agree to these works taking place within this year's budgets

Motion Withdrawn

29.2.4 **Trees**

Officers had met with one of the council's approved contractors to discuss trees works which are required at the brewery end of the site, primarily to remove fallen trees and branches from the water, which the contractor had broken down into three specific areas. Whilst the Committee agreed in principle to tree works being undertaken, they wished to seek expert advice from other bodies with similar pond issues together with seeking guidance from a wildlife expert on tree habitats before committing to the substantive works.

Therefore, on the proposal of Councillor Ginny Boxall, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill it was

RESOLVED to

Approve tree works as detailed in the plan drawn up by the contractor to be undertaken in September/October 2021 for Area A – trees cut back to water/mud level (coppiced) to let light in and tidy the site - £550

Defer a decision on further tree works pending further information in respect of:

Area B – Removal of trees in and around the site of the Heron's nest - £2,450

Area C – Clearance of trees, to tidy the area and open up the area to let light in - £3,000

29.3 Flood Meadows

Recommended works to be undertaken at Flood Meadows were detailed within Members' bundles which included removal of existing concrete block work bank edge (95m) and replacement with softer timber revetment and repair of existing footpath alongside the river as well as a gravel recharge at the upstream limit of Flood Meadows. Members felt the indicative costs for undertaking the path/bank works in its entirety was prohibitive currently and requested the Clerk works with the contractor who has replaced the bridges along this path, to reduce the works down to those which are necessary in the current financial year. This item to be referred to the next Full Council for approval

On the proposal of Councillor Susie Burns, seconded by Councillor Paul Crossley it was

RESOLVED to

- 1. Approve expenditure of £2,400 for the gravel re-charge to be carried out during the sum of 2021, once the Environment Agency licence has been approved.**

On the proposal of Councillor Susie Burns, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill it was

RESOLVED to

- 2. To request the Clerk goes back to Aquamaintain to price for the necessary works to the riverside path to ensure it can remain safe to use. This item to be referred to Full Council for approval**

29.4 Holybourne Pond

Details of proposals for improving the quality of the water at Holybourne Pond through a combination of improved drainage, dredging and a number of environmental alterations to enhance the offering and experience for local wildlife was included in Committee papers. Councillor Paul Crossley was able to update the Committee that the ownership of the pond was 'bona vacantia' and therefore, was under the ownership of the Crown.

On the proposal of Councillor Susie Burns seconded by Councillor Graham Hill it was

RESOLVED to approve

- 1. Expenditure of £5,000 to enable a tree survey, planning permission and subsequent tree works to be carried out to create more light at the pond.**

2. **The allocation of officer hours to research with Land Registry the options for taking “ownership” of the pond to enable grant applications to be made for more extensive works to the pond to be carried out as details in the Committee report.**

30 **Grounds Team Report**

The Grounds Team Report was tabled.

NOTED

31 **Allotments Report**

The Allotments Report was tabled.

NOTED

32 **Holybourne Play Area**

The Committee received a report for the upgrade of the play area at Holybourne which included a “wish list” from Jerry Janes on behalf of the Holybourne Village Association (HVA). In addition, further suggestions included an outdoor table tennis table and basketball hoop possibly with the HVA potentially undertaking crowd funding to facilitate. Members agreed that a Tender be created which includes the “wish list” plus additional requirements which would then be put to Full Council given the costs will be in excess of £10,000.

On the proposal of Councillor Paul Crossley, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill it was

**RESOLVED to
Approve the creation of a tender for the Holybourne Play Area project including the list from HVA as a guide for contractors. Responses to go to Full Council for a decision.**

33 **Public Gardens Bucket Swings**

Quotations had been received from 3 companies and full details were included in Members bundles for the meeting.

On the proposal of Councillor Susie Burns, seconded by Councillor Ginny Boxall it was

**RESOLVED to
Approve Vitaplay to install 2 bucket swings in the Public Gardens (following Last Night of the Proms event in July) at a cost of £8,350 ex VAT**

34 **Greenfields Pump Track**

The development of a “pump track” at Greenfields on the site of the existing “mud jumps” had been included on the approved project list for the council for 2021/22 and a background paper with indicative costings was included in Members bundles

On the proposal of Councillor Ginny Boxall, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill it was

RESOLVED to
Approve the creation of a task and finish group including community representatives to develop a concept design for the project to go out for public consultation prior to any ITT being drawn up. Councillor Sharon Cullen offered to Chair this group.

35 Fencing at the Public Gardens

Members received three quotations for partial replacement fencing for the Public Gardens to improve security of the site.

On the proposal of Councillor Graham Hill, seconded by Councillor Paul Crossley it was

RESOLVED to
Approve Martin Cashmore to replace 85m of existing railings at a cost of £12,270 ex VAT in green to be ratified by Full Council.

36 To receive Meeting Notes

The Meeting Notes were received as tabled without amendment:

Walk Alton – 8th April 2021

Flood Meadows, Kings Pond Steering Group Meeting – 20th May

NOTED

The meeting closed at 8.51 p.m.