

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 12th APRIL 2017
AT THE TOWN HALL AT 7:00PM**

Present: Councillor Graham Hill - Chairman
Councillor Mrs Sharon Cullen
Councillor Mrs Pam Jones
Councillor James Voller

In attendance: Mrs Pat Harris - Finance & Administration Manager
Mr Ty Smith - Grounds Manager

14 members of the public & 1 member of the press

422 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman made the following announcements:

1. Reminded everyone present to switch off or silence their mobile phone.
2. Advised the hearing loop is in operation and devices should be switched to the "T" position.

423 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Matthew Bayliss, Mike Dicker & Derek Gardner.

424 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th January 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following clarification and amendment:

Councillor Mrs Pam Jones - Item 13 on the agenda which relate to placing a 'Jane Austen' bench on the Butts.

The amendment requested that Councillor Mrs Pam Jones' name be removed from the Resolution under Minute 291 Request for Benches: Sitting with Jane – a proposal from Mr. Peter Desmond Thomas as the seconder for this motion.

After much discussion I proposed (not Cllr Hill) that we should defer the decision so that it could be considered by Community & Events. I believe Cllr Bayliss seconded this. When it was put to the vote it was defeated... Further discussion ensued and then Cllr Gardner said we had a recommendation front of us....Members are asked to consider whether to:

- i) Grant permission for the bench to be located on Town Council land at The Butts
- (ii) Whether to accept ownership of the bench once installed

Cllr Gardner then proposed this and Cllr Voller seconded it and it went to a vote. I was the only one voting for the recommendation. I did then question whether Cllrs could propose and second and then vote against a recommendation... no further comments were made and we moved on. However, at no time do I remember anyone putting forward an amended proposal and I certainly did not second anything as stated in the minutes(see below)... I had supported the bench proposal all along.

Councillor Graham Hill recommended a deferment, but this was not seconded. Therefore, councillors took a vote on the proposal before them. On the proposal of Councillor Matthew Bayliss, seconded by Councillor

*Mrs. Pam Jones it was **RESOLVED TO NOT** grant permission for the proposed Jane Austen commemorative wooden bench to be located on town council land at The Butts*

The Chairman agreed that the Resolution be amended to state that Councillor Derek Gardner proposed, with Councillor James Voller seconding.

425 Declarations of interest

The Chairman reminded members of their obligation to disclose any pecuniary interest in items on the agenda. None were declared.

426 To consider any requests for Dispensation to allow councillors with pecuniary interests to speak and vote

No requests were tabled.

427 Questions and representations from Members of the Public

1. Mr Alan Orme spoke in respect of the matter he raised at the last meeting (minute 284.5) when he raised the question of footpaths at Flood Meadows which had become much narrowed by overgrowth and his disappointment that despite being told work would be undertaken by the grounds team to remove the overgrowth and restore the paths to their original width, this had not been undertaken. He went on to state that two of the paths in Flood Meadows are in a really poor state and that the council should consider doing something about this as a matter of urgency. He also requested an update as to his request for a tarmac path along the Lenten Street entrance point towards the Basingstoke Road which as he had previously stated was grass in the dry weather, but mud in the wet. The Grounds Manager advised that work had commenced on the existing path network but on removing the overgrowth on the path edges it had led to more problems being identified. Councillor Mrs Pam Jones stated that upgrading of the existing footways was subject to budgets and that until the Maintenance Plan for Flood Meadows had been established, timescales and maintenance regimes established and confirmed no commitment could be given. Mr. Orme was provided with a copy of the Report from Footprint Ecology for his information. The Chairman confirmed that Mr Orme's comment would be taken into account.

2. Mr Mapley spoke of his concerns regarding some members of the public totally disregarding the new signage which requires dogs be kept on a lead at Kings Pond. He cited incidences which had arisen quite recently of unacceptable behaviour and language when dog owners were requested to put their dogs on leads. Mr. Mapley asked what authority does the council have to enforce bylaws questioning the fact that the town council does not have a dog warden or a member of staff to ensure enforcement of bylaws. Councillor Mrs Pam Jones explained in more detail the very nasty situation recently when a mother with three small children all under the age of six was confronted by a lady with two dogs (one on a lead, the other running freely) and one of the dogs approaching the children which upset one of the children and the mother who did not wish any engagement with the dog.

Mr Mapley insisted that he personally wished to see enforcement. Councillor Mrs Pam Jones went on to advise that she had discussed byelaws with the Town Clerk and it is proposed to hold a "Public Information" day (similar to that held in Flood Meadows) which would be an opportunity to inform and engage with the public about Kings Pond, bye-laws, wildlife on site and future plans to manage the area making sure it is a safe environment for all. The council felt engagement and education was a far better approach. Both Councillor Mrs Pam Jones and

Graham Hill confirmed they would take the matter to the CTCG meeting with the police next week as both sit on that forum and would asked that PCSO's regularly patrol open spaces in and around the town. Officers were also asked to enquire of EHDC whether the Dog Warden could visit Alton's open spaces.

The Grounds Manager interjected that the grounds team are regularly met with rude responses when they ask members of the public to put their dogs on a lead at Kings Pond although he went on to say that approximately half of those asked to do so, did but the other 50% are rude and ignore any requests.

3. Mrs. Ginny Boxall wanted to ensure that her proposal had been received by councillors – which was confirmed and asked whether councillors had any questions for her, which they did not.

4. Ms Tanya Applegath stated that she welcomed the new signage for the council's open space but enquired as to whether directional signage to the open space had been considered i.e. finger posts or indeed she could provide some stickers to give direction.

Councillor Mrs Pam Jones commended Ms Applegath on behalf of Alton Matters on the recently published "walks" leaflets.

5. David Tomlinson on behalf of the Holybourne Village Association (HVA) made a plea that if there is anything happening relating to Holybourne that the matters are referred to the HVA. He advised that the HVA had met the previous evening and they held very strong view on the name for the open space at the Persimmons development known as Barley Fields - which was a marketing name used by the developer only. Mr & Mrs Levene (also present this evening) would be able to provide a history of the use of the area but locally the "field" was known historically as Balloon Fields. He went on to state that residents should be asked for their opinion as to the naming of the open space at this location. Councillor Mrs Pam Jones suggested that the school children of Andrews Endowed School should also be asked but it was respectfully pointed out that schoolchildren or new residents to Alton would be unaware of the history of the site and would not understand its association with balloon launches.

The Chairman, Councillor Graham Hill added he was very well qualified in terms of the development and that he had a long association with this area and had been instrumental in achieving the transfer of this land to Alton Town Council and that he was keen that residents of both Alton & Holybourne were consulted. He added the item was on the Agenda and councillors would have an opportunity to discuss taking into account all they had heard from the public gallery.

428 Neighbourhood Plan Actions/Policy Update

The Committee noted that an updated plan had been circulated to all councillors last month and there were no further updates since that time.

NOTED

429 Anstey Park Improvements

i) TRIM TRAIL

The Trim Trail had been installed and the post install inspection taken place and it was confirmed that the equipment was now available for public use. A press release was planned for next week.

ii) NETBALL COURT

The Town Hall is still awaiting the results of the site survey carried out at Anstey Park to ascertain the scope of works for the restoration of the netball courts. In the absence of the report been received, this item is therefore deferred to the next meeting

iii) PARKING ARRANGEMENTS

Members received a report advising that further to the implementation of the 4 hour parking restrictions at Anstey Park the Town Hall had received two requests from local businesses to purchase 22 “permits” for the car park. Following discussion with the Chairman of the Committee, letters were sent in response to decline such requests; the intention behind the restriction was to prevent the park being used by business users and thus preventing legitimate users of the open space from being able to park. It is clear from the enquiries received that the car park has been used for commercial parking for some time.

In addition, correspondence has been received from the Basingstoke Ramblers requesting use of the car park by ramblers groups for £1 per car and Alton NADFAS (National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts) seeking permission to park four days per year whilst they take a coach to go on away days.

Councillors in discussing the proposal before them unanimously agreed that parking facilities at Anstey Park are for legitimate users of the park and its facilities and therefore on the proposal of Councillor Mrs Pam Jones, seconded by Councillor James Voller it was

RESOLVED to

Decline to approve the requests made by Basingstoke Ramblers and Alton NADFAS for their use of the car park at Anstey Park.

430 Open Space at Chandos Lodge

Members received a report from the Town Clerk confirming that further to the Full Council decision to proceed with the transfer of the land at Chandos Lodge the land transfer is now due to complete on 18th April. Alton Town Council have completed their part of the formalities with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor signing the legal documentation which has been returned to Persimmons on 11th April - Special Delivery. However completion cannot take place as the contractor has yet to finish the required work and a site inspection taken place. The commuted sum of £174,471.49 is due upon completion of all formalities and this has been invoiced, together with the commuted sum for the play area of £29,500 and the additional £5,000 to assist with remedial works to the site. The Clerk is due to undertake the final site inspection with Persimmon on 18th April.

Members noted that immediate expenditure is required to make the site safe in terms of authorised vehicle access requiring the installation of a knee rail around the road side perimeter and a height restriction barrier at the entrance to the car park area. This work has to be undertaken before the concrete blockade is removed by Persimmons. The committee also noted that signage to match the existing open spaces signage on the other Town Council sites is required and the recommendation would be to use the “rustic” design was agreed as this would be in keeping with the surrounding area and was favoured by the Holybourne Village Association. Additional signage was also agreed to include parking restriction signage similar to that at Anstey Park to ensure there are sufficient spaces for school drop off and pick up and no overnight parking. Members also noted that the signage for the open space would be erected without the name of

the open space until such time as it had been determined by public consultation. They also agreed that a consultation is required to allow residents to determine the apparatus for the play area and asked that officers obtain 3 quotes for supply and design of the play area against the budget allocated of £29,500 which must be sympathetic with the immediate surrounding area.

Members noted that the immediate expenditure requested (and the rationale behind the request for the release of monies to cover) which is as follows:

- Knee rail (to match that already on site) around the perimeter £4,950
- 6m wide height restriction barrier (2m) in green powder coated metal similar to the colour and material used at Anstey Park) £2,160
- Signage – rustic £500 approx
- Additional mower (cut and collect) to cut the paths into the natural area and maintain the remainder of the site – suggested machine is an Amazone Profihopper-4 Wheel Drive, ex-demo £24,300
- Parking restriction signage at entrance to car park £150

Councillors having taken into consideration the representations from the public gallery during the meeting and also noting the feedback from the Holybourne Village Association agreed that the naming of the site and the style of equipment for the play area should involve the public and agreed that consultation on both aspects would take place.

On the proposal of Councillor Mrs Pam Jones seconded by Councillor James Voller it was

RESOLVED to

- (i) Approve the release of up to £32,485 from the commuted sum for the required items.
- (ii) Undertake a public consultation on the naming of the site.
- (iii) Obtain quotes for installation of play equipment with a budget of £29,500 and include with the public consultation on the naming of the site.

431 Bench at The Cairn

Members received in their Agenda papers a proposal for consideration from Ginny Boxall for a permanent Jane Austen commemorative bench to be placed on The Lawn, at the Assembly Rooms.

Councillors sought clarification from the attending Grounds Manager as to what would be required should permission in principle be granted for a bench on the lawn who advised that a permanent path to the bench across the ground would be needed to avoid the surface being churned into a muddy path during rainy periods and also to keep the lawn looking manicured, a base which could be either grasscrete or concrete with appropriate edging would be necessary.

The Chairman acknowledged that the Assembly Rooms was currently being marketed as a wedding reception venue and the lawn area was very much part of that and the design of a bench would need to be approved by councillors to ensure that it met with standards in keeping with the current marketing strategy. The Grounds Manager added that there is also a permanent housing receptacle for the Christmas Tree and that at Yuletide the area was used for the petting farm attraction.

The Chairman suspended Standing Orders to allow questions to Mrs. Ginny Boxall regarding the costs she had presented in her proposal and whether any of the additional expenses so highlighted had been considered to which she confirmed that they had not as she had been unaware of the additional requirements at the time of putting forward her proposal. Councillor Mrs. Pam Jones stated that the costs for the seat would be from public donation and any additional cost would be covered in the same way.

In discussing further the request before them and having noted the response given by the Grounds Manager agreed that they were happy to grant “in principle” only landowner consent for a bench on the lawn area at the Assembly Rooms but this would be subject to evidence of public consultation having taken place and council approval of detailed final design.

On the proposal of Councillor James Voller, seconded by Councillor Mrs Sharon Cullen it was

RESOLVED

- (i) to grant “in principle” landowner consent for a bench on the lawn area at the Assembly Rooms subject to the result of a public consultation demonstrating that residents were in favour of a Jane Austen commemorative bench
- (ii) Subject to (i) above, the final design to be approved by Alton Town Council.
- (iii) Full funding of the bench together with all installation costs would be fully covered by donation.

432 Replacement Grounds Team vehicle

Members noted the report from the Town Clerk advising that following the purchase in the summer of 2016 of a Toyota 4WD pick up to replace the 20 year old blue Toyota, the older vehicle was retained through the winter as it was still road legal and facilitated the increased size of the grounds team to 9 persons. The vehicle has now been removed from service and scrapped as the cost of repairs and MOT requirements exceeds the value of the vehicle. Given the size of the team a third vehicle has proven to be a requirement although it is not necessary to have another 4WD but a simple 2WD panel van would suffice for movement between sites and to be utilised for litter picking rounds. Cost for a vehicle approximately 2 – 3 years old are in the region of £7,500 + VAT and the Committee were being requested to consider the approval of the release of funds of up to £7,500 from the grounds team equipment budget to be offset, subject to EHDC approval, by up to 50% through a S106 application. In agreeing to the allocation of funds to purchase a replacement vehicle, members duly sought confirmation that there was sufficient budget allocation from the grounds team equipment budget to cover the 50% cost which was given. Therefore in the proposal of Councillor James Voller, seconded by Councillor Mrs Sharon Cullen it was

RESOLVED

to approve the purchase of a replacement vehicle for the Grounds Team up to a value of £7,500 from the Grounds Team’s Equipment Budget (2017/18)

433 Management Plans

i) King’s Pond Management Plan

Members noted that Dr Day had undertaken a site visit with Dr June Chatfield and had prepared a draft prescriptions and objectives for this site which has been circulated to

members for comment. The Conservation Volunteers will also be going out to survey the pond to ensure the Town Council has a current survey and record of the wildlife.

ii) Flood Meadows Management Plan

The Flood Meadows Steering Group met with Dr Day from Footprint Ecology on the 8th February and a site visit had been undertaken with a telephone meeting also set up with Dr June Chatfield to understand the works undertaken to date on ecology and habitats. A draft prescriptions and objectives had been circulated to the Steering Group (enclosed with your bundle) and a further meeting will be set up with Footprint Ecology in early May to progress this. Dr June is compiling a species list for the site.

Members duly noted the reports received and stressed that the comments and views of the Flood Meadows Steering Group be taken into account for Flood Meadows and the comments of the Conservation Volunteers be taken into account for the King's Pond Management Plan.

NOTED

434 Allotments

Members received a comprehensive report from the Allotments Officer following the annual renewals for plot holders sent out at the beginning of December 2016 which also provided an opportunity to plot holders to join the Alton Allotment Association. This year saw the largest number of plot holders not renewing their tenancies with over 20 not renewing. In addition the council issued five notices of termination to plot holders who had not paid their annual rent and were therefore in breach of their Tenancy Agreement. This has significantly reduced the waiting list to only 10 and vacant plots are currently being offered.

An enquiry has been received from a plot holder on Spitalfields asking if bees are allowed on the sites. The Council has allowed an area to be developed at the top of the Hawthorns site where a plot holder keeps a couple of hives and carries his own insurance as well as being a member of the Meonvalley Beekeepers. The requesting plot holder has been advised to contact the beekeeper on Hawthorns to discuss the possibility of additional hives at Hawthorns.

Members noted that the first formal inspections of the season were carried out on the 4th and 5th April by the Grounds Manager and Grounds Administrator accompanied by the Site Representatives. Future inspections will be carried out during the first week of each month until October by the Grounds Administrator.

Members questioned the high number of plots not being renewed this year which was due to a mixture of age as well as some plot holders stating that growing vegetables was not easy.

NOTED

435 Permitted use of Public Open Space

Members received a report from the Town Clerk following a local resident requesting to present the following petition to Alton Town Council in respect of fox hunting on Alton Town Council lands <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/432/633/929/> This petition is to ban fox hunts from lands owned/controlled by Alton Town Council.

The Chairman firmly stated that the hunting of foxes with hounds is illegal and has been since 2004 and Alton Town Council does not permit fox hunting on its land. What is currently

permitted is the use of its common land known as The Butts, for the gathering of the annual Boxing Day trail hunt which involves the use of an artificially laid scent to provide hounds with a path to follow. There has been no indication or evidence produced that the Hampshire Hunt is acting illegally.

Councillor Mrs Pam Jones suggested that PTS or Bovine TB was present in some hounds and read extracts from a publication to this effect. She also raised concerns that children are actively encouraged to stroke the dogs at the meeting point and that dog faeces could present issues on The Butts for users of that facility – Councillor Mrs Sharon Cullen agreed. However the Chairman stated that all of the council's open spaces allow dogs and therefore the argument could be extended to all of its open spaces and should therefore not be a concern to councillors purely for the area known as The Butts.

The Grounds Manager in responding to the specific question of dog faeces not being cleared up after the Boxing Day Meet stated that the Hampshire Hunt not only cleared up behind their hounds but also cleared up the faeces' of other users and he and his team had found them to be exemplary in their responsibility to ensure the area was left clear of faeces when the meet left The Butts.

On the proposal of Councillor Mrs Pam Jones, seconded by Councillor Mrs Sharon Cullen to revoke the permission granted to the Hampshire Hunt on a split decision with the Chairman using his casting vote the **PROPOSAL WAS NOT CARRIED.**

436 Wey Walk Working Group Update

Members received a report from the Wey Walk Working Group within their papers which also included a proposed letter to be circulated which officers were seeking approval to circulate.

As the council's representative on the group Councillors Mrs Pam Jones wished to commend the group on all the work they have undertaken and the positive meeting held with the Town Clerk. In noting the report councillors agreed to approve the circulation of the proposed letter before them.

On the proposal of Councillor Mrs Pam Jones, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill it was

RESOLVED to

Approved the circulation of the proposed letter as contained in the agenda papers without amendment.

437 Grounds Manager's Report

Councillors received the Grounds Manager's report. In responding to a question, the Grounds Manager confirmed that they still experienced a few problems at Anstey Park with cars accessing the park despite the dragon's teeth. He also confirmed that balloon launches started last weekend that the rugby posts will be coming down at the end of April following the Rugby Club's 7's tournament at the end of the month.

Councillors commended the Grounds Team on the presentation of the council's open spaces at this time.

NOTED

438 Meeting Notes from Footpath Wardens Meeting

The Meeting Notes of the meeting held on the 16th March 2017 were received.

NOTED**439 Exclusion of the press and public**

On the proposal of Councillor Mrs Pam Jones, seconded by Councillor Mrs Sharon Cullen, it was

RESOLVED

that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be temporarily excluded.

440 CCTV relocation

At the Open Spaces Meeting of the 4th May 2016, Members approved an expenditure of £4,881 to relocate the CCTV hardware from the Police Station to the Town Hall when the Police leave their current premises in the centre of Alton. (Minute 634 refers).

Members received in their bundles a comprehensive update report from the Town Clerk referring to the relocation of the CCTV hardware from the Police Station with options to either relocate this hardware to the Town Hall, citing the equipment on the mezzanine floor above the corridor with a monitor being housed in a locked cupboard or to install the equipment at Winchester Police Station.

The CCTV hardware is scheduled to be removed from its current location on the [REDACTED] and discussions have been on-going in respect of the practical implications of relocating to the Town Hall. This will render the system purely reactive and able to be viewed by the Police only after an incident has taken place.

[REDACTED]

Members noted that this was not a foreseen expenditure and had not been budgeted for but they were disappointed that the Police had been asked if they would contribute towards the cost of relocating the equipment and that they had declined to contribute towards the costs involved. . However, it is hoped that discussions with EHDC may result in approval for S106 funding but were aware that this was not guaranteed. There is however currently just over £8,000 that could be drawn down in CIL monies to offset the cost of this. The Committee wished officers to continue their discussions in seeking this funding.

Members being invited to approve an additional expenditure of [REDACTED] for the relocation of the CCTV to Winchester for monitoring, the cost being offset against any S106/CIL funding which can be secured agreed that although unforeseen wanted to ensure that the proactive monitoring on offer from the police should be formalised so that councillors could see what they are getting

for their money. The Chairman also requested officers to seek an invitation from the police for committee members to visit Winchester and observe what is covered under “proactive monitoring” to enable them to gain a better understanding of the service on offer.

On the proposal of Councillor Graham Hill, seconded by Councillor Mrs Pam Jones it was

RESOLVED

to approve the expenditure of [REDACTED] for the relocation of the CCTV to Winchester for monitoring, the cost being offset against any S106/CIL funding which can be secured.

The meeting finished at 8.35 pm.

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