

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 19th JULY 2017
AT THE TOWN HALL AT 7:00PM**

Present: **Councillor Graham Hill - Chairman**
 Councillor Mrs Pam Jones
 Councillor Mrs Sharon Cullen
 Councillor Miss Bisi Eni-Olotu
 Councillor James Voller

In attendance: **Mrs Leah Coney - Town Clerk**
 Mr Ty Smith - Grounds Manager

9 members of the public

66 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.

67 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Mike Dicker and Derek Gardner.

68 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th April 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

69 Declarations of interest

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

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

No requests were tabled.

71 Questions and representations from Members of the Public

Mr Nigel Walter. Mr Walter spoke in respect of the signage erected at Kings Pond and the proposal currently being discussed regarding implementing a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO for short) for the area around Kings Pond prohibiting anyone with a dog from exercising their dog unless it is on a lead. He gave a detailed overview of his concerns and requested that Members reconsider taking any further steps regarding a PSPO for Kings Pond and use the existing Byelaw to prosecute any irresponsible dog owner or make use of Community Protection Notices.

Councillor Mrs Jones responded to state that whilst she noted Mr Walter spoke of isolated incidents at King's Pond people must record any issues to the Police on 101 otherwise the Town Council is not aware of any offences if they are not reported.

Mr Mark Waldon. Mr Waldon also wished to speak on the subject of King's Pond as a Dog Law specialist. He gave Members further information on the background to PSPS and Dog Control Orders and suggested that Community Protection Notices would indeed be a more appropriate solution. If cases are isolated then blanket prohibitions are not required.

Councillor Hill wished to clarify his understanding that Community Protection Notices are reactive and imposed upon individuals after the event rather than Protection Orders which are more proactive and imposed by the Police or local authority. This was confirmed as correct.

Tanya Applegath. Ms Applegath wished to enquire if the issue of stickers or signage to the Town's open spaces has been progressed? The Clerk confirmed that they had not as yet. She also wished to enquire as to when improvements to Alton's skate parks would be made. Councillor Hill confirmed that it is on the list and Mr Jenkins had provided an outline cost of £20,000 for Jubilee but there are other matter which are currently higher priority for funding, including the new netball courts at Anstey Park, but suggested Ms Applegath keep enquiring but the committee will not let it fall off the agenda.

Charles Kaye – Flood Meadows Working Party and the Wey Walk Working Party.
Mr Kaye wished to note the drawing referenced in the consultation documents illustrating the wetland area and the potential closure of the path alongside it which he is concerned would conflict with the aspirations of the Wey Walk group.

There were two representations made in writing.

1. Ed Hayes Senior Public Affairs Officer – The Kennel Club in respect of the matter of PSPOs at King's Pond. This had been circulated in full to Members in advance of the meeting,

2. Angela Forsyth at Eggar's School who wished to inform Member that funding has now been secured for the Eggar's School Park and Stride, seeking the assurance of the Town Council that, if the path were to be built, the Town Council would take over the responsibility for the maintenance of the path.

Members delegated this down to the Town Clerk to determine the practicalities and costs before she responded to Eggar's School.

NOTED

72 Review of Open Spaces Committee Terms of Reference

The Committee reviewed its current Terms of Reference and agreed to readopt the existing terms of reference with no amendments.

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

RESOLVED to
Re-adopt its Terms of Reference as follows:

Open Spaces Committee (7 Members)

1. Membership of the Open Spaces Committee shall be determined each year at the Annual meeting of the Council at which time the Chairman and Vice Chairman for the year will be elected.
2. The Committee will meet at least four times per year with all meeting dates for the forthcoming municipal year confirmed in advance of the Annual Meeting of the Council.
3. The minutes of the Committee are to be reported to and received by the Council at each Full Council meeting.
4. The principle purpose of the Open Spaces Committee is:
 - a. To oversee all the council's open spaces in accordance with the Town Council Corporate Strategy, including the formulation and implementation of plans to guide their future management and the recommendation and monitoring of budgets.
 - b. To consider the adoption or provision of new open spaces as appropriate where they have a high community value and amenity benefit for the public.
 - c. To provide, administer and maintain the council owned allotment sites across town, in accordance with its statutory function; working with the Allotments Sub Committee and the Alton Allotment Association to ensure good communication with ploholders and to receive suggestions on improvements.
 - d. To enhance the quality of the offering of the existing town council owned public spaces to ensure they deliver high value community benefit which reflects the specific character of each site.
 - e. To monitor the town's footpath network and work with Hampshire County Council to facilitate improvements.
 - f. To encourage engagement with the community, interest groups and external bodies to assist in the conservation and enhancement of informal green spaces including Flood Meadows, King's Pond and Windmill Hill.
 - g. To monitor and maintain play areas, skateparks and other formal and informal play provision, upgrading as appropriate.
 - h. To increase the quality and availability of play areas, trim trails, walking routes and areas for informal ball games.
 - i. To work with the Police and East Hampshire District Council to facilitate the addressing of environmental issues across town council open spaces, including dog fouling, littering and antisocial behaviour.

73 Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPOs)

Councillor Hill introduced this item to confirm that the item under consideration is whether Alton Town Council wish to ask EHDC, as the appropriate authority, to look into whether

PSPOs would be appropriate for the Town's public open spaces and if so to direct them to undertake the required consultations with the public and stakeholders as part of the process.

The Town Clerk's report, informed by EHDC Animal Welfare had outlined the process as follows:

There needs to be evidence presented that the specific PSPO is going to address an issue, such as preventing dogs from being out of control at King's Pond and the risk to wildfowl and members of the public. Also in respect of Flood Meadows, the issues caused by large numbers of dogs being under the control of one person which Alton Town Council wishes to control.

EHDC have advised that the Town Council may also wish to consider dog related PSPO's for all Alton Town Council land holdings, rather than just specific locations due to the process involved in creating PSPOs.

PSPOs, like Dog Control Orders are created by EHDC and enforced by them and can be used for :

- *Exclusion of dogs from land.*
- *Dogs on leads*
- *Dogs on lead by direction*
- *Restriction on the number of dogs walked by one person*

In respect of fouling of land by dogs and the removal of dog faeces Alton Town Council land is included within the District of East Hampshire Dogs (Fouling of Land) Order 1996. And this legislation is still enforced by Authorised Officers so a PSPO is not required to deal with dog fouling on Alton Town Council land.

Signage is required advising of the restricted area(s) created by a PSPO so there will be costs incurred for signage.

Consultation Process: EHDC as the authority creating the PSPO's on behalf of Alton Town Council must consult the Chief Officer of Police and the local policing body for the police area that includes the restricted area, this must be done formally.

Consultation may include, but is not limited to:

- *Residents of Alton*
- *Local dog societies*
- *Local animal welfare organisations*
- *Local veterinary practices*
- *Local professional dog walkers*
- *Local residents groups*
- *The Kennel Club*
- *East Hampshire Community Forum*

Whilst there is no requirement to advertise details of a PSPO consultation in local newspapers, as best practice EHDC should seek to do so.

Animal Welfare considerations:

There should be areas (Alton Town Council land holdings) where dogs can be exercised without restriction to comply with the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

Maximum number of dogs under a PSPO. Expert advice is that this should not exceed six dogs under the control of one person.

Town Council staff can be authorised by EHDC to carry out enforcement action if this is a route that Alton Town Council wish to follow.

The Fixed Penalty Notice can be set at not more than £100. If the Fixed Penalty Notice is not paid and Magistrates Court action is undertaken and the offender is found guilty, the fine is a Level 3 offence on the standard scale up to £1,000.

Councillor Hill clarified that the two open spaces under consideration are at the Public Gardens and King's Pond in respect of the keeping of dogs on leads and across all of the public open spaces in respect of the number of dogs walked at any one time.

Councillor Mrs Jones commented that this is always an emotive issue but the Town Council has a duty of care towards all users of the open spaces; we are currently consulting residents on proposals for our open spaces. Could this question be considered as part of the consultation and therefore is a deferral possible?

Councillor Hill confirmed that this item was not time sensitive. Members have heard details of a new measure this evening proposed by residents and the Council does have the consultation for Flood Meadows and King's Pond which could inform the position. The Open Spaces Committee is to meet again on the 4th October so it can be re-tabled then.

Councillor Mrs Jones clarified that the byelaws states that a dog has to be effectually restrained and this seems to have led to confusion. The Town Clerk confirmed that the byelaw did indeed state this; on the signage effectually restrained has been interpreted as on a lead. Councillor Mrs Jones noted that unless people are reporting incidents at King's Pond then we cannot respond if we are not aware.

Councillor Hill said he would be happy with the deferral and the signage could be covered over in the meantime until this is resolved.

The Town Clerk wished to clarify that Members were requesting the covering over of the "dog on lead" symbol on the entrance signage to King's Pond, which was the symbol relating to the byelaw which references that dogs should be effectually restrained. Members concurred, requesting that if residents see a dog doing anything wrong then they should report it on 101 as stated on the entrance signage.

On the proposal of Councillor Mrs Jones seconded by Councillor Eni-Olotu it was

RESOLVED

To defer consideration of the motion relating to PSPOs on Alton Town Council Open Spaces until the next meeting and in the meantime to cover over the symbol denoting "dog on lead" on the entrance signage.

74 Neighbourhood Plan Actions/Policy Update

The Town Clerk provided a verbal update on the Neighbourhood Plan Actions attributed to the Open Spaces committee noting that the land at Chandos Lodge has now been added to the Town Council's open spaces.

75 Grounds Team Report

The Grounds Manager presented the Grounds Team Report, noting that grass cutting and flower watering are the order of the day at this time of year and the team are getting positive feedback when they are watering on the High Street. In summary:

1. Anstey Park. Regular grass cutting is being carried out. Litter picking daily. A new barrier across the footpath gap in the hedge has been installed to prevent children running direct into the road. Two new site information signs have been installed. A rounders pitch and a 60m straight running track have been marked at the bottom of the enclosure.
2. Jubilee Playing Fields. The two new strips on the 1st team cricket square are growing well and matching in with the rest of the square. The cricket season is well under way and feedback from the cricket club is good. Two new site information signs have been installed.
3. Public Gardens. The planting of the beds for the Regency celebrations has been completed. Regular grass cutting is taking place with the new Proffi-hopper mower. An old concrete and wood slats bench has been replaced with a new plastic style bench.
4. Open Spaces
 - Windmill Hill: Routine visits to service the 3 bins are being carried out and check the boundary's and gates. Areas are fenced by the water board. Footpaths are mowed regularly.
 - King's Pond: Weir clearing of debris as required. Routine mowing is taking place. Two new memorial benches have been installed and the other benches and bins cleaned.
 - Northanger: Regular visits taking place, ditch checked for obstructions and mowing. Cattle are grazing the meadows.
 - Flood Meadows: Regular visits for bins and litter are taking place. Three new site information signs have been installed. Regular mowing is taking place.
 - Holybourne: Regular checks to play equipment and litter picking taking place.
 - Allotment Sites: The maintenance is being carried out by Allotment Association Volunteers. Routine inspections are now carried out by Alexandra Bond. Sites are cleared as requested.
 - Butts: Regular visits to litter pick and empty bins. Regular mowing is taking place. The ground has survived visits from the Fair, Circus and Victorian cricket and still looks good.
 - Chandos Lodge: Grass cutting is taking place regularly. New signs are in place.

NOTED

76 Management Plans – King’s Pond and Flood Meadows

The public consultation process has now commenced in respect of both of the draft management plans. The documentation was included in Members bundles. There will be a drop in day, run by Footprint Ecology at the Assembly Rooms on the 29th July from 10am to 4pm followed by two public information sessions on site at Flood Meadows on Saturday 12th August and at King’s Pond on Saturday 5th August from 10am to midday. The consultation will run until the end of August and key stakeholders will be invited to both the drop-in day and to respond to the consultation. The results of the consultation will be collated and analysed by Dr Day at Footprint Ecology and as a result there may well be additional changes to the draft plan. These will come back to Open Spaces at the beginning of October for approval with the intention of ratifying the adoption of the documents at Full Council later that month.

Members advised the Town Clerk of their availability for the public drop-in sessions and Councillor Mrs Jones wished to commend the Steering Group for taking on board the work involved in preparing the documentation for King’s Pond as well as Flood Meadows.

NOTED

77 Allotments Update

The Allotment Officer’s report advised that the formal inspections are undertaken by the Grounds Administrator accompanied by the Site Representatives during the first week of each month until October. This has resulted in a number of letters sent and subsequent relinquishments.

The waiting list is at an all-time low currently standing at only 13 with a majority of those on the list waiting for a plot at Borovere.

NOTED

78 Wey Walk Working Group Update

Members had been advised that a Wey Walk stakeholder meeting had been scheduled to take place immediately before the meeting of the Open Spaces Committee meeting. Invitations to this were sent to key Councillors and Officers at EHDC and HCC who have a remit which includes health and wellbeing, open spaces or tourism in a bid to promote the proposals and to seek resources and funding for the proposed Wey Walk.

It had been identified that the next step was to put together a business plan and costings in order to be able to submit funding applications to secure a Project Manager who would then in turn look at co-ordinating funding opportunities and work streams. Following discussion with the Town Clerk it was agreed in principle, subject to Open Spaces Committee endorsement that the Town Hall would contribute officer resources in the form of the Grounds and Property Administrator in order to construct an implementation plan and costings with an outline business plan by the end of September to present back to the group. The Town Hall does not, at this time, have the resources to Project Manage the works going forward but could help to “kick start” the project.

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

RESOLVED

To commit officer resource to the creation of a basic implementation plan and costings for the Wey Walk to enable the submission of an application to secure funding for a Project Manager.

79 Open Spaces – Updates

Chandos Lodge/Barley Fields

Members were advised that the site has recently had a knee rail and a height barrier installed together with two entrance information boards and signage advising of the four hour restriction in the car park area. There has been a recent press call to highlight the new car parking for the school in this area.

Work has also been carried out to strengthen and protect the newly planted trees, clear the densely wooded area on the right hand side of the main entrance to the estate and to mow a path across the far side of the site to start preparation for the development of a wildlife walk and nature area.

Further to the press release published last week, the Town Council is currently undertaking a public consultation on the preferred design of the proposed play area for the site together with seeking suggestions on a name for the site, known locally as “Barley Fields” The consultation runs from the 24th July until 31st August. The results of the consultation will be presented to Members at the next Open Spaces Meeting on the 4th October for determination.

NOTED

Netball Courts

Following the last meeting, Hampshire County Council have produced the specification drawing for this Project (contained in supplementary papers) in order to enable an indicative price to be obtained for the works under the HCC framework.

As previously reported it is recommended that HCC be appointed to project manage this refurbishment in order to take advantage of the framework rather than the Town Council undertaking its own procurement process. The indicative price for the works has been returned at £99,954 +VAT, excluding electricals on the existing floodlights and HCC's management fee.

The price indicated comes with a number of caveats from HCC:

- 1) It is likely that the overall price for the works may be reduced through the procurement process as the County will run a mini competition for the works rather than just approach one for the framework contractors.
- 2) The contractor who visited the site has priced cautiously, based upon the removal of the existing surface in its entirety. It is quite normal to punch holes in the existing surface, fill with free draining material and then go over the top with the new surface, which will represent a cost reduction. A recent project undertaken at Samuel Cody School was undertaken in this way.

Given the timeframe the Town Council is working towards (completion April/May 2018) HCC need confirmation that the funding is in place before undertaking a mini-competition between its contractors for the works and then carrying out the build itself. In order to meet this timeframe it is suggested that a S106 application to earmark the public open spaces funds from the Anstey Road Sports Grounds site (£114,750) is submitted to underwrite the cost of the works. This will give officers 6 months before the build commences on site to offset this funding with grant applications. The resulting surplus from S106 will then be returned to the "pot" for other projects.

Councillor Mrs Jones said she was very pleased to see this project taking shape and this was echoed by the Chairman.

The Clerk stated that should Members wish to proceed she will then contact Judy Talbot at Alton Ants and Sport England to inform them of the project.

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

RESOLVED

To approve the project plan for the netball courts, subject to a successful application for the utilisation of S106 Public Open Spaces funds offset where possible by grant funding.

80 To receive the Meeting Notes of the Footpath Wardens Meeting held on 15th June 2017

Members received the Footpath Wardens Meeting held on 15th June. Councillor Mrs Jones noted that three volunteers have come forward and are working towards returning "Walkers are Welcome" to Alton.

NOTED

81 To receive the Minutes and Recommendations of the Allotments Sub Committee

Members received the Minutes and Recommendations of the Allotments Sub Committee Meeting held on 15th June.

It was noted that an audit should be undertaken of the fencing around the sites and this will be carried out by the Grounds and Property Administrator.

NOTED

82 Exclusion of the press and public

On the proposal of Councillor Mrs Jones, seconded by Councillor Hill 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.

83 Security Patrol Reports

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

84 Update on CCTV Monitoring relocation to Winchester Control Centre

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The meeting finished at 8.50pm.

DRAFT