

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 26th APRIL 2018
AT THE TOWN HALL AT 7:00PM**

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

In attendance: Mrs Leah Coney - Town Clerk
Mrs Pat Harris - Finance & Administration Manager
11 members of the public

385 Chairman's announcements

The Chairman made the following standard 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.

386 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Mike Dicker, Bisi Eni-Olotu & Derek Gardner.

387 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st February 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

388 Declarations of interest

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

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

No requests were tabled.

390 Questions and representations from Members of the Public

1. John Dunn, Surrey Hunt Monitors read out the following:
"Will the Hampshire Hunt be allowed to parade on the Butts on Boxing Day 2018, considering that members of the hunt have been videoed and reported for illegally riding quad bikes around the roads in the Alton area whilst following the hunt? I have attended most of the Saturday hunt meets and without exception, members of the hunt on quad bikes have been acting illegally, recklessly, irresponsibly and causing a public nuisance.

I have videoed the illegal and dangerous carriage of passengers including an elderly man who nearly fell into the road and a young child who also nearly fell off at speed.

Would you allow a motorcycle club to use the Butts for a meeting if it had been reported to you that they were doing the same things? I think not”

2. A local resident raised a number of matters:

- (Referring to Minute 318.3 item 5) stated that he had seen no evidence of the claim by the Town Council that scalping had been laid last October on Greenfields between the kissing gates and that the Council should make a correction to the claim that it had been done. It needs doing now as where the ground between the gates had sunk, it had filled with water and unless wearing wellington boots it was difficult to walk through.
- The footpath which runs across Flood Meadows from Lenten Street to Brandon Road still not done.
- Sawdust and chippings following tree works has still not be cleared away.
- The cutting back of the edges of the footpaths done was done very well; when will the other paths be done.

The Town Clerk undertook to speak to the grounds team regarding the items raised which relate to Flood Meadows and also arrange for additional scalping to be laid at Greenfields.

3. Mr. Kuttner asked why this committee had not seen fit to have the question of giving permission to the Hampshire Hunt to hold their meet on The Butts on the Agenda. *“Why is the Council putting residents and visitors lives in danger with irresponsible riders, dog faeces on the ground, touching the hounds, reckless riders on quad bikes?”*
4. Diana Wood stated that she objected to the Boxing Day meet on The Butts pointing out that hunting was banned in 1997. She further stated that *the meet was not a showpiece but more an opportunity for them to show off and show that they can just do what they want.*
5. Julia Burns stated *“I live on The Butts and have done for a number of years. It is inappropriate to run a Hampshire Hunt and in addition I have personally witnessed the Master of the Hunt raising a toast to the landowner – like something akin to feudal times. There are faeces left on the ground from the hounds and the hunt do not pick up. It is an outdated idea and not supported by the majority of families”.*
6. Mark Collins – Surrey Hunt Monitors stated that he had been following the hunt for 35 years and most hounds are fed on fallen stock and oats and suffer from pathogens not suffered by domestic dogs and they are more extreme. They never pick up dog faeces leaving Alton town residents having to deal with the problem. *“Hampshire Hunt have hunted illegally and this has been reported to the police and Surrey Hunt Monitors have presented all of the evidence in support of their claims”.*
7. Paula Langley stated The Butts is public land and is for the public to enjoy. *“This is a private club – not like the fair”* and went on to question the Council for allowing such a disruptive event on public land without taking into account the publics views.

8. Mr Kuttner came back to ask the question – why did this council not have courage and confidence in the democratic process and put this on the Agenda for discussion.

The Chairman responded that this committee does possess courage and has full confidence in the democratic process. The item had been on the Agenda in 2017 and a vote was taken to allow the Hunt to meet on The Butts. It is not about courage and democracy; it is a public open space which hosts a number of groups and organisations. We cannot pass judgement on morality grounds. As long as they adhere to the law and our Terms & Conditions and it is open to the public then permission is given.

The Chairman then read out the following:

The Chairman of the Open Spaces Committee has discussed with the Clerk recent concerns raised with the Council in respect of the gathering of the Hampshire Hunt (HH) on Boxing Day at the Butts. The item is not included on the agenda as the Police have confirmed that there is no illegality in their assembly and whilst it is within the gift of the Town Council to determine what activities take place on its land, there is no evidence to suggest that they are carrying out any activity which would give rise to any liability on Alton Town Council. In summary, the two main issues in question are the presence of quad bikes without number plates and the presence of a terriers. The Police have confirmed they will be reminding the HH of the rules of the road in relation to quad bikes and secondly they have confirmed that use of terriers at the gathering is not evidence of any intention to hunt illegally; the gathering is a simulated hunt and therefore the use of hounds, horses and terriers may form part of this. The Police have also said they intend to meet with Surrey Hunt Monitors shortly to discuss the current position.

Councillor Pam Jones questioned how many Altonians are aware of the concerns expressed by those attending this evening regarding the Hunt meeting on The Butts. Not everyone does Facebook and you should go to the Public. She added that in the past she had voted against.

Councillor Graham Hill added that he was totally against fox hunting and it is illegal. If Surrey Hunt Monitors have evidence to support illegal hunting then this should be taken to the Police. The gathering on The Butts on Boxing Day attracts some 400/500 people and members of the Pony Club also participate. He reiterated that it is not a private event, but a public event.

There then ensued a lengthy exchange of views between the public gallery and committee members as to whether the Hunt should be allowed to continue to meet on the Butts. One resident complained that she had in fact written to her Town Councillor who had not even bothered either to acknowledge or respond to her and in her mind this was bad manners and it was deemed only common courtesy to acknowledge and respond to those who had made contact with you.

In drawing the public session to a close The Chairman reiterated that if there is evidence of illegal hunting and inappropriate driving of quad bikes on the highway or any other criminal activity then this must be presented to the Police in the first place. Should that evidence be taken forward and as a result criminal activity is confirmed then the matter can come back to this committee. Councillor Pam Jones added that the sending of unpleasant e-mails to councillors is not “the way to go”.

391 Grounds Team Report

The Committee received a comprehensive report from the Finance and Administration Manager on the Grounds Team’s activity since the last meeting and noted the level of detail provided.

The Chairman asked that the Committee's thanks be conveyed to the ground team members for the way that they tend the council's open spaces which have not gone unnoticed over the last three months. Councillor Sharon Cullen congratulated the team on the colourful display of winter/spring planting in the High Street.

NOTED

392 Allotments Report

The Committee received a report from the Administration Officer advising that 20 plots had been relinquished following renewal letters for this year were issued. Offer letters have been issued on these plots with 8 acceptances received. The committee noted that a new committee had been appointed for the Allotment Association. It was further noted that allotment inspections for the forthcoming season had commenced during the week of 9th April.

Councillors Pam Jones and Sharon Cullen advised they had recently attended the Allotment Association's AGM and that the Secretary of the Association would be forwarding posters for the noticeboards to try and raise awareness. Councillor Sharon Cullen also asked that the Council writes to the retiring Chairman of the Association to thank him for his time in the Chair and his contribution to the Association.

NOTED

393 Walkers are Welcome

On behalf of the Committee Councillor Pam Jones stated she was delighted to learn that as part of the continuing drive of both the Town Council's Footpath Wardens and Ramblers Association, a group of enthused volunteers have joined together to form the Alton Walkers' Forum Steering Group and the minutes of their meeting held on 7th April are included in Members' bundles. The Town Council will remain on the circulation list for minutes and Walkers are Welcome is a regular agenda item for update on the Footpath Wardens agenda.

It is proposed going forward that Alton Town Council provide continued support to the group as part of the evaluation of the temporary membership will need to demonstrate their meeting of the current criteria which includes the activities undertaken to promote Alton as a "walking" town. The Walking Festival will prove be an invaluable source for evidential data to this end. In order to progress matters further, the group is seeking grant support funding from Alton Town Council in the sum of £130, of which £100 is to cover the cost of temporary membership and £30 is for the hosting to the "to be designed" Alton Walkers website.

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

**RESOLVED to
approve of a small grant funding of £100 to cover the temporary
membership to Walkers are Welcome and £30 for the website
licence.**

394 Alton Rugby Football Club Proposal

Members received a proposal from Alton Rugby Club in respect of proposed improvements to Pitches 1 and 2 and the training pitch at Anstey Park. Since the report was written by ARFC there have been a couple of alterations to the proposal which is now seeking to include pitch 2 in the works (it was originally just pitch 1). Councillor Graham Hill thanked the Rugby Club and the

Head Groundsman at Twickenham for the detailed information provided which together with the Town Clerk's comprehensive report allowed the committee to have a full understanding of the work to be carried out and the support being requested from the Town Council. He also extended his congratulations to the Rugby Club in gaining £5000 grant funding.

The resources requested from this committee are therefore as follows:

- 1) Use of 1 x Senior Groundsman/ Manager for 12 days (2 x one week, spring and autumn and 1 x weekend in June) for verti-draining, sanding, seeding and feeding together with the tractor (and trailer, seeder, etc.. as required). Work to start on the 14th May.
- 2) In addition this will need to be preceded by two days' work the previous week on the mower to get the grass to the recommended length before undertaking the verti-draining.
- 3) Purchase and application of the weed/feed and seed regime recommended by Mr Kent (Head Groundsman at Twickenham). Utilising the preferential rate offered to ARFC by the RFU price list puts the cost of the seed at £1,181.25 per pitch and the fertiliser at £228.75 per pitch. Total for Spring and Autumn £4,230 plus labour and equipment to apply.

ARFC will pay for the hire of the verti-drainer, 360 tonnes of sand and additionally a SISIS Quadraplay machine for ATC ground staff to use for ground maintenance at Anstey Park and any other ATC ground that would benefit from its use. In addition they will pay for the stone materials required for the creation of the drainage holes across Anstey Park to be created during the Rugby Force weekend in June.

This proposal, as is made clear in the report from Mr Kent, requires this work to be undertaken annually so this will be a commitment to the Council going forward if the work helps reduce the drainage issues and improves the pitches. ARFC have been advised that any financial and resource commitment going forward would need to be matched by the club in order to be affordable and deliverable.

Total Cost to the Town Council £4,230 plus labour and machinery (approximate cost of use of existing Grounds staff is £2,579)

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

RESOLVED to approve

1. Expenditure of £4,230 for the purchase of weed, seed and feed as per the report from Mr Kent
2. Agree the use of Town Council Grounds staff to undertake the works as detailed above.

395 Update Reports

Members received the following update reports:

(i) Public Spaces Protection Orders

Councillor Graham Hill read out the following e-mail which he had received from EHDC by way of update.

Dear Councillor Hill,

I write after a telephone discussion last week regarding the way forward for a public spaces protection order (PSPO). I am looking that the animal welfare service of East Hampshire District Council will commence consultation in a few months' time. I am mindful that this needs cabinet approval before consultation occurs.

The intention would be to replace the current Dog Fouling of Land Act 1996 and legislation that controls dogs with a public spaces protection order. The new PSPO would consider consultation on the following areas:

- *Increasing the current fine for offences from £50 to a higher fee.*
- *Consider further controls the dogs in EHDC cemeteries.*
- *Consider restrictions on dogs in enclosed public children's play parks.*
- *Continue the existing restrictions in Queen Elizabeth country Park to controlled dogs having a negative impact on ground nesting birds.*

Before any consultation can occur, these issues need to be evidence-based. One consultation and approval from cabinet has been sought consultation needs to be with the following people at a minimum:

- *All town and parish councils*
- *Chief Constable Hampshire Police*
- *Hampshire crime Commissioner*
- *Other interested user groups.*

I am mindful this is a large task which once consultation begins will provide of lot of feedback which will also need to be considered, when there is a clear timeline for the consultation I am very happy to keep you updated.

(ii) Path for Park and Stride at Anstey Park

Project Engineer Tony Gales (Havant Borough Council) has updated to confirm that work will commence on Tuesday, 8th May and the work is expected to take 3 weeks to complete.

(iii) Netball Courts at Anstey Park

Refurbishment of the community/netball courts commenced on Monday, 16th April and will take 6 weeks to complete. The project is being managed by Miles Rankine, Hampshire County Council Landscape and Scandor are the contractors appointed to carry out the work. Planning permission has been granted for the replacement floodlights which are also to be installed. During the refurbishment, the contractors will have a small compound to the west of the courts and ground protection matting has been installed to allow deliveries into and onto the site. Scandor will operate between the hours of 7.30 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. Monday to Saturday and contact details will be clearly displayed on site in case of need. Whilst the refurbishment is being undertaken, the informal access through the hedge off Anstey Road will be closed temporarily and notices put up to this effect.

The Town Clerk advised that unfortunately the contractors had suffered the theft of their trackway at Anstey Park on Monday evening this week and that the Police had been notified. It was envisaged that this would not have an adverse impact on the timeline for the project. A further meeting with the contractor and project manager is scheduled for next week.

In responding to the question raised by Councillor Pam Jones and the removal of the bin adjacent to the netball courts and the skate-park; officers advised its removal was required after it had been set light to and destroyed.

(iv) **Wey Walk**

A full report was included within Members bundles for information together with photographic details for the location for the Wey Walker markers which was produced by the Grounds Administrator, Alexandra Bond.

The Town Clerk was pleased to table a detailed milestone project plan which had been drawn up between Louise Parker. It was further confirmed that the signage work will be progressing over the coming months.

(v) **Parterre Garden**

This item straddles both the Open Spaces Committee and the Community & Events, having been a project for consideration under the latter and therefore an update will be presented to both committees for information.

The Parterre Garden itself has been completed and has been planted out with 178 box hedging plants and 32 David Austen "Little Pet" roses selected for their resilience to disease and appropriate for planting in sheltered areas. The centre piece of the Parterre Garden is the restoration of the second Miss Belles Fountain which was "placed" in the Public Gardens under the former Alton Urban District Council.

The fountain when fully restored will be a drinking fountain and although the water supply has been installed up to the edge of the fountain itself the refurbishment of the structure and internal mechanism is yet to be undertaken. The bronze plaque and finials have been ordered and it is now a question of the supplier confirming when all parts are ready for installation.

Councillors will be aware from their recently published copy of *The Altonian* that invitations were extended to sponsor a rose at a cost of £50 which included a citation on the interpretation panel which will be installed in the garden. At this time all roses have now been sponsored with a waiting list in operation.

It is still the aim for the Mayor to officially "open" the Parterre Garden on Saturday, 16th June; a date which coincides with the Alton Lions event in the Public Gardens.

The Chairman clarified that the Parterre Garden is to be a garden of quiet contemplation for those we have lost and is not an extension of The Cairn which remembers those Altonians who lost their lives specifically during WWI and WW2

NOTED

396 **Kings Pond and Flood Meadows Management Plans**

Included in Members bundles was a colour coded version of the maintenance programme for both sites. The costed works for year one have been approved by the Town Council in the budget for 2018/19 and therefore works will commence in the spring once the programme has been

timetabled with the Grounds Team. The Town Clerk read out the Meeting Notes of the meeting held and confirmed that these notes will be circulated shortly.

NOTED

397 CCTV

A quote has been obtained from ADP to install additional CCTV cameras in the Market Square following a request from the Police that given the shape of the "square" and the current swivel camera, the images captured have not always provided them with the evidence required to satisfy investigations.

The proposal before councillors is for a 2 camera IP system to provide improved coverage of the areas (full details of proposal are contained in the supplementary papers. Included in the quotation provided is a 4TB Network Video Recorder with 4 channels, capable of continuous recording for approximately 14 days at 25 FPS. The cameras will be attached to the soffit of the Town Hall (installation is similar to that of existing equipment).

The purpose of the additional camera system is to enhance the current provision in the prevention and recording of crime. The agreed recording length is 14 days which should give adequate time for the Police to request any footage, although the recording length can be extended if required at an additional cost. The current CCTV images are stored for 28 days. As there is already signage in place in the Market Square that CCTV is in operation, there is no additional requirement.

Installation in the Town Hall will ensure cabling will be installed at high level through the roof space and cabled down to the location of the NVR following the existing cable run put in place for the existing camera. The new NVR is to be located in the cupboard where existing camera monitors are located together with a supplied monitor.

Councillors should note that this will be a standalone system and not connected to the internet, therefore the images will not be able to be viewed remotely. Any footage can be viewed by the police on the monitor or will need to be downloaded to a USB memory stick using a mouse connected to the NVR. There will be a training requirement of 1 hour on the system and this is included within the quote provided. The quotation is subject to a final site survey should councillors commit to this request for the installation of additional CCTV equipment in the Market Square.

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

**RESOLVED to approve
the installation of new CCTV at a cost of £1,722.50**

398 Receive the meeting notes of the Footpath Wardens on 15th March 2018

The meeting notes were received. In response to Councillor Pam Jones asking for progress on the position with F/P 26c she would contact Elliot Rowe, Rights of Way, to arrange a site meeting to take this forward.

The meeting finished at 8.09 p.m..