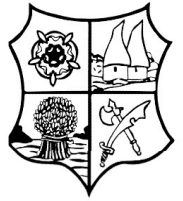


ALTON Town Council



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Town Clerk: Mrs Leah Coney

Town Hall
Market Square

Alton
Hampshire
GU34 1HD

19th August 2021

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to a **meeting of the OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE** in the Town Hall, Market Square, Alton on **Wednesday 25th August at 7.00 pm** when the under mentioned business will be transacted.

This meeting will be streamed via zoom and members of the public may request a meeting code to access proceedings.

Whilst members of the public are very welcome to attend in person and speak at the meeting, we continue to encourage written representations in advance where possible.

Yours sincerely

LConey

Mrs Leah Coney
Town Clerk

To: Members of the Open Spaces Committee

Councillor Suzie Burns (Chair)
Councillor Graham Hill (Vice Chair)
Councillor Ginny Boxall
Councillor Gideon Cristofoli
Councillor Paul Crossley
Councillor Sharon Cullen

Copied to: All other Councillors for information

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE – 25th AUGUST 2021**

AGENDA

- 1 Chairman's announcements
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 Minutes of previous meeting held on 9th June 2021
- 4 Declarations of Interests
- 5 Declarations of Interests & Requests for Dispensations:

Councillors are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest which they may have in any item of business on the agenda no later than when that item is reached. Unless dispensation has been granted, you may not participate in any discussion of, or vote on any matter in which you have a pecuniary interest. You must withdraw from the room when the meeting discusses and votes on the matter.
- 6 Questions from members of the public for any item not on the agenda.
- 7 Current Projects
 - a. King's Pond
 - b. Holybourne Pond
 - c. Public Gardens – Dementia Friendly Space
 - d. Will Hall Farm Lower Field
- 8 Grounds Team Report
- 9 Allotments Report
- 10 The Butts Interpretation Panel
- 11 Vendors on open spaces (review of trial at the Public Gardens)
- 12 Friends of King's Pond and Friends of the River Wey – Terms of Reference
- 13 Friends' groups storage facilities.
- 14 King's Pond and Flood Meadows Management Plan review.
- 15 Permanent closure of through road at Anstey Park
- 16 Resurfacing Anstey Road entrance.
- 17 Lions Bench.
- 18 Windmill Hill memorial toposcope.
- 19 To Receive Notes from:
 - a. Friends of King's Pond – Sunday volunteer group – Councillor Cristofoli
 - b. Walk Alton Minutes June 2021

ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE – 26th AUGUST 2021

ITEM 6 PUBLIC SPEAKING – WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS

1) Dr David Murdoch – King's Pond

Thank you for inviting me to the BioBlitz on 26 June at Kings Pond, Alton. I hope you don't mind these comments but the reasons are obvious.....

*As the County Dragonfly Recorder, the pond was a considerable disappointment as I recorded only 2 species of damselfly – tens of Common Blue *Enallagma cyathigerum* and singles of Large Red-eyed Damselfly *Erythromma najas*. There were none of the larger dragonflies that I would have expected. This is almost certainly because of the huge numbers of waterfowl fouling the pond and decreasing the water quality, as well as probably eating waterweed or dragonfly larvae. I am also interested in birds and butterflies. We saw a very limited range of birds, fewer than I would expect in a healthy environment, and not a single butterfly.*

As a GP with considerable experience of Infectious Diseases, I was appalled by the huge numbers of Brown Rats openly feeding on food left for waterfowl. These are a major potential source of human disease. The Town Clerk told me that the Town Council has tried to take action to control vermin numbers, which I would enthusiastically support, but some residents have deliberately prevented these measures – actions that are crassly stupid and, I hope, against the law.

As a parent, I am sorry to say that I was disgusted by the state of the pond and environs, THE WORST I HAVE EVER SEEN, even having lived for years in London – and that is really saying something. We were expecting to go pond-dipping with our young sons but the water quality made that out of the question. With huge quantities of wildfowl faeces and feathers visible everywhere, and certainly rat droppings there as well, I felt that the whole site was unsafe. I have great sympathies with the Council in their efforts to improve the site when a proportion of residents are actively trying to thwart sensible measures taken for the good of all. Sadly it may take a serious illness or a death linked to the Pond to persuade the lunatic fringe to behave in a civilised manner.

In conclusion, I thought King's Pond could be a nice place for a family to visit but at present it is disgusting and a health hazard; I would never take my children there in its present state. It is of minimal value for its wildlife.

2) Mr McGowen - The riding of E-Scooters in Public Open Spaces.

I wanted to let you know that I was almost hit by an e-scooter last week while walking in Flood Meadows. I have very poor hearing but I doubt that anyone would have been aware of it coming. It sped past me and only missed me by a few inches - I could feel the "whoosh" as it passed. I was too slow/surprised to take a photo of the young male rider. I have seen one by the Pubic Gardens on another occasion but that was just in Lady Place Car Park. I don't know if signs in the park and in Flood Meadows would be helpful in reminding people that they are illegal to ride in such spaces. Thanks

3) Ms Ford (extract) Locking of the Public Gardens in winter.

I can see that locking the gates at 10pm is just an invitation for the youngsters to jump the gates as they did again last night. It is a nightly event as I live opposite the far gates. Heaven only knows what will happen when they get locked at the silly time of 5.30.

People are only just getting home from work at that time, children are still returning from after school activities and they are expected to walk along non-existent pavements in the dark.

The foot fall in the early evening from this side of town is quite large.

When I queried this a few years ago I was told it was "Historic" "well things move on, we don't live in the dark ages anymore. Perhaps you all can have an updated think on this problem?"

4) Mr Furnival – grass cutting at King's Pond

I think the lack of mowing at Kings Pond has been a positive thing. Not sure if you've been there in the last couple of days on your way into or from town hall but it's resembling a beautiful wild meadow at the moment with lots of flowers which is great for biodiversity - I've seen many more butterfly there this year. I like how the odd path has been mowed but the rest has been left to grow freely. Is this a scheme we can retain going forward next year and beyond? As not only does the reduced mowing give a good food source to the birds when grazing, other nature is benefiting too.

5) Barbara Tansey – Awning at the Public Gardens (extract)

The second thing is that wanted to write to say thank you to the council for the tables and benches in the market Square and other public places, and especially for the large gazebo in the public gardens. I want to let you know how much it has been appreciated by choirs such as Ancora and Alton Community Choir, as we've been able to continue rehearsing, and meeting to sing, come rain or shine. Orchard House, and other groups, have been using it regularly too.

I am therefore wondering whether funding for hiring it has now come to an end, after 'freedom' day, and if so, whether any other funding could be found to keep it going into September? The groups and choirs are still meeting, but most of the venues we've historically hired for rehearsals aren't geared up yet to let people back, and won't be until September. Also, with fast rising Covid cases, people are understandably still wary about meeting indoors.

I understand funding is always an issue, but thought it worth asking if we can keep it going until September, as it has been so well used, and greatly appreciated.

(Clerk's note – it has been confirmed back that the awning will remain until the end of September)

6) Rats at King's Pond

As you probably know, there is a serious problem with rats at Kings Pond. About five weeks ago we were standing on the path looking at goslings and baby ducks when rats started appearing. We counted twelve rats visible from one spot at one moment in time.

Multiply that to all around the pond and then think how many hidden rats there are for every visible one. Consider how rapidly they breed and the size of the litters and you will agree there is a problem.

We no longer visit the pond because the beauty of it and the other birds and wildlife there is completely ruined by the prospect of rats running out in front of and all around you.

Not visiting the best outdoor beauty spot in Alton is one thing, but unfortunately the rats are now spreading to neighbouring gardens and even houses.

Our daughter with three young children lives about 100metres away from the pond up the hill. Last week she took her children into the garden to play only to find. FIVE RATS IN HER GARDEN IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY. They weren't afraid and stood their ground. She had to clap her hands and shout to get them to leave. This is not acceptable.

Now she has rats running in the cavity wall of her house and across the loft at night and is having to pay £76 for people to come and deal with them.

Yesterday was the last straw when she opened her meter box to read the meter and a large rat jumped out of the meter box.

She has complained to Alton Town Council who own the Kings Pond land and to East Hampshire environmental health but got nowhere. With three young children and a job she doesn't have time to keep complaining so I am taking up the cause.

Alton Town Council told me they paid for bait boxes at the pond but some do-gooders removed the boxes, so there is nothing more they can do. They told me to ring Environmental Health, which I did, and

environmental health said they can do nothing unless Alton pay them to put more boxes. Therefore, I am now appealing to you for help as to the way forward to resolve this problem.

As you know rats are classed as vermin and we used to regularly treat sewers etc with rat poison. They carry Weil's Disease| and can bite babies, young children. They are also very susceptible to Covid . It is possible that in the future they could develop a new strain of covid and pass it to humans if this close contact, with children touching play equipment rats have been all over etc continues.

There must be some way we can eradicate this rat problem.

It must surely be a human right for children to play in their own garden free of vermin.

There must be solutions that are acceptable to the misguided do-gooders. I'M THINKING ALONG THE LINES OF DELIBERATELY FEEDING THE RATS FOOD LACED WITH A CONTRACEPTIVE PILL. WHY HAS NO ONE TRIED THIS? Of course, it wouldn't stop all breeding as there is no guarantee all female rats would eat it every day, but just reducing their fertility would help and it would satisfy those who think baiting the rats is cruel.

It is time for the council to think outside the box and consider whether using some form of contraception on the rats is a way forward and how this can be done.

Just for the record I am an animal lover and don't support cruelty to any living creature but people, especially children matter more than rats .

I appreciate all the hard work the councillors do for Alton and have seen on the facebook pages some of the uncalled for and unacceptable criticism you suffer

I don't like complaining but enough is enough where the rats are concerned. Our young grandson saw the rat in the meter box and was terrified. Who knows what that does to a child. He could have nightmares for years or phobias about rats or opening boxes etc.

The children have heard the rats at night, running in the walls and across the ceiling and my daughter has told them it's birds nesting in the loft, but with all these rat sightings the children will soon realise the truth.

I realise the council has limited funds but please prioritise the rat problem in the town even if other things have to go. It is not fair that young families who pay very high rates to live in these houses on Ashdell Park, are having to pay out of their income to eradicate rats from their property, when this is not of their own making, but due to Alton Council allowing the problem at the pond to get out of hand .Until the Pond is sorted the problem will continue and spread further afield as the rat numbers increase and it will be a continual ongoing expense for local residents to pay to have rats eradicated from their homes.

Thank you for giving your urgent consideration to this matter and applying inventive solutions to hopefully get it resolved A.S.A.P.

7) Rats in residential areas near King's Pond

We live a very short distance from Kings Pond. We have always occasionally seen rats in our garden and this has not particularly bothered us. However, as you are aware there are large number of rats now at the pond and I thought I would let you know we are starting to see the knock-on effect of this at our property. We have heard lots of noises in our attic and are currently waiting for East Hampshire pest control team to attend to determine what this may be. Yesterday afternoon we saw rats 5, possibly 6 times within the space of an hour in our garden. some could be the same animal but they were not all the same size so there at least 2. This is despite us being around, going in and out of the garden etc. We feel this is an unacceptable number of rats in a medium sized domestic garden and suspect they are coming up from the pond as they always disappear down the hill in that direction.

ITEM 7 CURRENT PROJECTS

FOR INFORMATION/DECISION

a. King's Pond

Rats

Members will have read the comments from members of the public in item 6. The Town Clerk has continued to have conversations with Environmental Health. The legislation is clear that the Council has a legal responsibility under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 to ensure so far as practicable that our land is kept free from rats. If a landowner fails to take action, they could be liable to prosecution.

There are two ways of controlling the rat population, one is reactive and one proactive. The reactive measure is culling through trapping; the proactive one is to reduce the increase in population by discouraging them from settling and breeding at the site by removing their food source.

The EHDC Enforcement Team have confirmed that they will be able to undertake some educational work at the pond to inform people of the harm being caused through overfeeding and the effect this has on the rat population to try and discourage the leaving of food on paths which the rats eat. Clearly the most effective response would be to cease all ad-lib feeding at the pond by the public, implementing a regulated feeding regime to prevent starvation for other wildlife but this may be very difficult to enforce.

On that basis the only option left open is to cull. There were a number of questions asked by the public following the last deployment of traps which were answered by officers. In summary:

Why are you using a pest controller at Kings Pond surely the Ecosystem can regulate itself?

The Council has a legal responsibility to ensure so far as practicable that our land is kept free from rats. If we fail to inform Environmental Health and take action, the Town Council could be liable to prosecution. Therefore pest control measures are taken. In the absence of human intervention the ecosystem at the pond may regulate itself and we see evidence of the Heron eating small rats and we have just installed two Tawny Owl boxes to encourage a more "natural" means of controlling the rat numbers.

However, despite the signage and publicity given to discourage people from putting out food at the pond, excessive amounts of food are still being left on the paths, banks and on the water at the pond. As a result of this the rats and other species are thriving. Basically too much food for the rats means they remain at the pond to breed – for every two rats that stay at the pond instead of leaving the site to seek food and shelter elsewhere or succumb to survival of the fittest, within a year than could create up to 1,000rats! (Female rats can produce six litters a year consisting of 5-10 pups per litter. Rats reach sexual maturity after 4-5 weeks) This is far too much for even the hungriest of Herons or Owls to eat. In short, human intervention has created the increasing rat problem, so further human intervention is required to correct the rat problem.

Why do you kill rats with traps rather than using other methods?

The Town Council is mindful of the advice from our pest controller but also from the RSPCA on the methodology employed for the removal of rats. Our contracted pest control will not "catch and release" for a number of reasons – primarily because the rats are classed as vermin we have a responsibility under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949 to keep rodents to a minimum and if they were caught and released it is just moving the problem to the next landowner.

Translocating rats is also believed to potentially result in high mortality rates, prolonging suffering as they struggle to find food, shelter and face competition from other rodents. Additionally certain rats are illegal to release in the U.K so this would be unlawful.

The RSPCA advocates that if rats are to be controlled then the recommended method is via kill traps which are quick and efficient. “Humane” traps are known to cause welfare issues through the stress of the rat confined in an enclosed space, potential hypothermia from breath causing moisture condensation inside the trap, wetting the fur and making them cold. This would all be in contravention of the Welfare of Animals Act 2006; additionally traps would need to be checked several times a day. The Town Council does not use poison as it would affect other wildlife and/or dogs or cats who may eat the poisoned rats and we would not use glue traps which are inhumane.

But surely other animals could get into the traps?

In accordance with best practice, measures should be taken to avoid trapping non target species. For this reason traps are enclosed within a metal box housing to prevent other animals or pets from accidentally tripping them in passing. They are securely anchored to avoid them being moved from their location. There is indeed a risk that animals of a similar size to a rat or smaller could access the trap but there is no way of preventing this – there is no such thing as a rat only trap and the risk has to be weighed against the overall risk of not complying with our duty under the legislation and the complaints from visitors to the pond and neighbouring properties over their increased numbers.

RECOMMENDATION: Members are requested to approve a further deployment of rat traps at the pond.

BioBlitz

Enclosed in Members bundles are the results from the BioBlitz. These have previously been published on the Town Council website under the Open Spaces / King’s Pond tab. It is noted that there was an error on the recording of the swans as there are only 3 not 4.

As requested following the last meeting the experts were asked to report if they found any evidence of mink at the BioBlitz but none was found and there have been no other reports to the Town Hall of suspected activity or observations since June.

Canada Geese.

Members may recall from both the BioBlitz results and observances on site that the number of Canada Geese has increased again this year. In part this may be affected by the lack of egg oiling which was last undertaken in 2018 but also as detailed above in the report on rats, due to overfeeding at the pond. This results in not just a public health risk with the number of droppings across paths, grass areas and on the pond itself but is also causing increased aggressive behaviours from the birds when humans approach assuming they will have food. A helpful link is below which considers all the issues and the potential solutions.

https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/siteassets/home/learn/conservation/gardens-and-landscapes/lan_-_canada_geese.pdf

Two of the experts at BioBlitz felt that the situation was now beyond controlling with just egg oiling with some form of cull, translocation or other action required to reduce the numbers at the site. Clearly, as with the rats, the Canada Geese are an emotive subject for many but without a clear plan to reduce numbers, will continue to cause a public health risk.

RECOMMENDATION: Members are requested to approve egg oiling (under DEFRA licence) in spring 2022 and consider any further action they may wish to take to control the public health risk.

Remedial Path Works

The completeness members are advised that the remedial works to the path alongside the railway line as detailed at the last meeting were carried out last month.

Environment Agency

Further to the last meeting a site visit was arranged by the Clerk with the Environment Agency. The notes from that meeting are included in Members bundles for information.

Grass Cutting

Members are requested to review the grass cutting regime for the site ready for 2022.

As an experiment and on advice offered to the previous Steering Group which covered the site the grass was left uncut for the growing season this year with a site wide cut and collect scheduled for September. The rationale for this was to see what effect this may have on insects and ecology but primarily, given the number of wildfowl and the development of Angel Wing* in a small number of birds, to provide additional green food source for them.

*Angel wing is occasionally observed in waterfowl residing near humans and the disease can sometimes be observed in areas where geese or ducks are excessively fed bread. The syndrome can be acquired in young birds often due to a high-calorie diet, especially one high in proteins and/or low in vitamin D, vitamin E, and manganese. It can also be genetic.

As has been evident through the cutting season the wildlife has eaten pretty much every blade of edible greenery, leaving only thistles, nettles and the like growing.

RECOMMENDATION: Members are requested to confirm the cutting regime for 2022

Dogs on Leads

A local resident has been observing the number of dogs off lead and has reported a decrease in out-of-control dogs following the deployment of additional signage around the pond over the summer. He has asked the council to consider the deployment of further signage to advise that dogs must be on leads around the pond and if not, owners may be liable to prosecution. Whilst the Town Council strongly advises people to have their dogs under close control, ideally on leads, particularly during bird nesting season, enforcement would need to be secured through a PSPO and enforced by district council staff. The current position with EHDC is that the PSPO for East Hampshire is in draft form and whilst it includes the words "Failing to put a dog on a lead when asked to do so by an officer" this is usually in relation to dogs causing a nuisance, not all dogs at all times which would require a modification.

RECOMMENDATION: Members are asked whether to request a modification be made to the PSPO by EHDC to include all dogs to be on a lead and/or under close control at all times / during bird nesting season, at King's Pond.

Trees

Further to the last meeting and potential tree works around the island Member requested work to area B & C be held in abeyance whilst expert views were sought on whether the trees should be left in situ or removed. The Environment Agency when visiting the site with Cllrs Cristofoli, Hill and Boxall in June, observed that so long as the roots are still attached to the bank there is no reason to remove and they can provide very useful habitats for both wildlife and fish.

Further discussions at BioBlitz confirmed this view and a useful link is below which expands upon the rationale for leaving the trees in situ.

Members are therefore asked to confirm whether, on the basis of the above, to leave the trees in situ.

b. Holybourne Pond Report by Councillor Hill.

Ben Abbatt tree surveyor, Cllr Hill and John Rapley from the Holybourne Association met at the pond in Holybourne on 6 August. This was to undertake a survey of work that needs to be done to the trees overhanging the pond. The relevant trees were identified, and Ben will submit a report to Town Council by end of August. The report will list the trees and the work that needs to be done. This will enable the Town Clerk to obtain quotes from approved tree surgeons for work to be done in the Autumn. A budget of £5,000 has been approved for this work.

c. Dementia Friendly Space Public Gardens

Following the last meeting the Clerk met with Karen Murrell to consider this project and work on the creation of a suitable space. As a result and with some grant funding secured by Karen, as well as assistance from the Grounds Team and from the NCS students over the summer, the space will be officially opened as part of the All Things Local Market and In Bloom awards day in the Public Gardens on the 4th September. The area is located by the sensory garden which has been refurbished and re-planted by the Dementia Friends. The space will also be home to two very colourful Happy to Talk benches painted by the students earlier this month. It is hoped that the group will undertake further work later in the year to put install a pergola and plant a wildflower area nearby. The space will be available to anyone using the park but will serve as a dedicated space for the dementia friends when they meet outdoors.

d Will Hall Farm Lower Field

A site walk over was carried out in July with representatives from Redrow Homes, Councillor Burns, the Town Clerk and Charles Kaye (on behalf of local residents). A number of remedial works were identified which are being actioned (tree works will be undertaken in the next planting season)

Pending the finalising of the legal agreement it is anticipated that the land transfer will take place in September. The Town Clerk has agreed that site access will be given to Redrows representatives to remove the poles and hoardings when their planning permission expires next year but has requested that two or three of the poles be retained for future Town Council use (a planning application will be required for their retention) to use to welcome people to the Town or to display any future green flag status for the site.

Charles Kaye has very kindly prepared an interim maintenance plan which serve until such time as a number of improvements are made to the site next year such as path upgrades and hedge planting, at which point members may wish to consider a management plan for the site. This is included for reference in members bundles.

The commuted sum for the site (coming from the former Bass Sports Ground development) has been agreed with EHDC and so once the land transfer is complete an invoice will be raised for £163,508.22

ITEM 8: GROUNDS TEAM REPORT

FOR INFORMATION

8.1 Grounds Team Personnel:

The grounds team have been operating at full strength throughout the summer months subject to normal annual leave commitments.

8.2 Vehicles & Machinery:

- 7.2.1 The delivery of the new tractor is due the week commencing 16th August following its arrival in the UK being delayed. All grounds machinery and vehicles are serviced in line with the vehicle/machine's relevant service history.

8.3 Projects:

8.3.1 Flood Meadows

The Alton Society Friends of Flood Meadows continue to support the council's work at Flood Meadows in carrying maintenance work along the river as well as remedial works on site.

The required Environment Agency Licence for the gravel recharge proposed works has now been obtained and the first phase of the work will be undertaken by volunteers as part of Rivers Week at the end of September led by Glen Skelton, with assistance from the Friends Group.

A new bin has been installed at the Tanhouse Lane entrance to the open space.

8.3.2 Kings Pond

Surveillance monitoring continues to be undertaken on the weir with the Grounds Team undertaking clearance three times a week. There have been a number of occasions where residents have taken it upon themselves to clear the weir and also clear algae, which has resulted in some confusion over the required frequency of the clearing regime but also in the depositing of foul-smelling material which the grounds team have had to remove. Hopefully both issues have now been addressed.

8.3.3 Public Gardens

The council is still awaiting the contractor to undertake the installation of new fencing approved for the Public Gardens. This project has been delayed due to supply issues, some of which are as a direct result of the Covid pandemic. The contractor has advised receipt of the fencing is due the week commencing 20th September and installation is scheduled the following week.

8.3.4 Greenfields Amenity Land – Northanger

Preliminary research has been undertaken on a potential "pump track" facility for this location. Officers are awaiting a decision by councillors as to whether to progress this project subject to funding being secured.

8.4 Pitch Provision:

The next phase of the pitch maintenance programme for Anstey Park in collaboration with the Rugby Club has been successfully undertaken and was completed by the end of the first week of July in line with agreed plans.

Similar works at Jubilee are due to start with verti-draining commencing the 2nd week of September and the 250 tonnes of sand spread across the 5 football pitches the 3rd week of

September in readiness for the football season. Manor Colts, Alton FC and Alton Cricket Club have all agreed their proportionate financial contributions to this project.

8.4.1 Football & Rugby

8.4.1.1 The rugby season is due to commence mid-August with football starting the third week of September at Jubilee and Anstey Park. Anstey Park extension (known locally as The Diggers) will again be utilised for football fixtures for both 9-a-sides and mini soccer as well as the provision of a full-size rugby pitch.

8.4.2 Cricket

8.4.2.1 The cricket season will close after the first weekend of September with all wickets being “put to bed” for the winter. All materials required for these works have been ordered and delivered to ensure that there are no unforeseen delays in allowing this work to take place.

8.4.3 MUGA Facility at Anstey Park and Skate Park at Jubilee

8.4.3.1 The MUGA has been very well used during the summer period with one tennis court permanently available for public use in addition to the local netball clubs utilising the facility for their netball training. The area has also been extensively used and enjoyed by the public for a number of other activities including scootering, radio-controlled cars and small children learning to ride a bike.

8.4.3.3 The Skate Park at Jubilee was officially opened with a much-heralded event on Thursday 29th July organised by Maverick (who were the contractors who undertook the build of the impressive facility). The event was very much for the young at heart and included displays, exhibitions and competitions. The Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor attended to formally open the facility.

8.5. Maintenance of Open Spaces

8.5.1 Tree & Hedge Cutting Works

- All hedge works on the council’s open spaces are due to be undertaken during the autumn by the council’s contractor in line with standing permissions and works orders. Hedge works are undertaken at Anstey Park, Jubilee, Kings Pond and Holybourne.
- A planning application was submitted to EHDC for the tree works on the avenue of Lime trees at Treloar Heights and permission has been granted for these works. Requests for quotes from approved contractors for these works was issued on 29th July with a return date for responses of Monday, 23rd August. It is envisaged that the work can be carried out early autumn.
- Following two “limb drops” from trees whilst path works were being undertaken at Kings Pond, the Council’s arboriculturist was requested to attend site to carry out a further inspection who confirmed that a number of trees were now showing a distinct deterioration and his recommendation was that removal was now required. A total of 30 trees have been identified and quotes were obtained from 3 contractors to undertake the work programme to remove, treat the stumps to prevent re-growth. A contractor was approved at Full Council on the 18th August and the works will commence in early September.

Unfortunately, these tree works will mean a further delay to the re-opening of this path under Health & Safety risks associated with falling limbs from the affected trees.

8.5.2 Grass Cutting

Grass cutting of the council's open spaces commenced in March and all sites are regularly cut in line with the maintenance plans for each of the sites with the exception of Kings Pond which is not being cut at the direction of councillors. The allotment sites of Wooteys, Borovere and the main pathways at Spitalfields are being cut by volunteers (allotment holders) with Grounds mowing the remainder of the paths at Spitalfields and Hawthorns.

8.5.3 Hard Standings and Paths & Fencing

- The proposed path improvement works at Flood Meadows will remain under review by the Open Spaces Committee.
- Remedial tarmac works to the access road into Anstey Park (from Anstey Road and Anstey Lane) have been scheduled to be undertaken shortly. However, Alton Town Council are seeking confirmation from Hampshire County Council, Highways that the contractors for the Anstey Road/Anstey Lane junction improvement will be able to undertake the agreed tarmac repairs to both entrances to Anstey Park when the installation of the traffic lights enters its final phase.
- The much-delayed junction works at Anstey Lane with Anstey Road are due for completion by the end of August and the contractors will be reinstating the area in the corner of Anstey Park which they used as their compound during these works taking place. Replacement hedgerow will also be re-instated during the autumn prior to that fencing will be erected.

8.5.4 Fertilizer and Weed Control

The Council's Contractor is to undertake the scheduled application of fertilizer and weed control at Anstey Park and Jubilee during September/October 2021.

8.5.5 Open Spaces and Pavilions

General:

- Members of the grounds team continue to provide support to both the Alton Society at their monthly meet of the conservation group at Flood Meadows on the third Sunday morning of the month and to the Friends of Kings Pond who currently meet on the fourth Sunday morning of the month.
- Increased anti-social behaviour is evident at Anstey Park, Jubilee Playing Fields and the Public Gardens. Discussions continue with the police who are fully aware of the incidents that are causing concern but little improvement is currently evident. Gates are now closed and locked at Jubilee in the evenings to prevent gatherings of vehicles and the ensuing anti-social behaviour. Anstey Park is of increasing concern with youths gathering under the canopy of the Finnimore which has led to intimidation of those using the clubhouse – again the police are aware and have increased patrols. The

Public Gardens are evidencing early hours of the morning intrusions and again the council continues to engage with the police on these matters. It is envisaged that the installation and shortly due to be commissioned CCTV cameras will enable both the council and the police to identify those responsible for breaking bottles, causing criminal damage to the pavilion and intimidation can be addressed.

- Littering and broken glass continue to be evident at a number of the council's open spaces with play areas being targeted at Anstey Park and the Public Gardens.

Anstey Park – Finnimore Pavilion

The council's new tenant has taken up residency with the facility offering art lessons in addition to her undertaking her own private gallery work. Deep cleaning of the changing rooms was undertaken at the beginning of August in readiness for the start of the rugby/football season which included all shower head cleaning and running through of all pipework.

Jubilee Playing Fields: Charles Read & Harry Baker Pavilions

Alton Town Council were successful with their application to secure funding for the installation of a defibrillator at the Charles Read pavilion. Delivery of the device is anticipated in August and should be installed in time for the start of the football season. The Cricket Club, in line with their licencing agreement continue to use the Harry Baker Pavilion, carrying out general maintenance as required. The Charles Read pavilion has enjoyed limited use throughout the cricket season, but played host to a U15 Hampshire County game on 10th August. Full preparation of the facility was undertaken which will also serve as a precursor to the upcoming football season.

Public Gardens

Summer time locking of the Gardens is now in effect with locking taking place at 10.00 p.m. in the evening with the contractor reporting no issues have been identified in terms of clearing the gardens and allowing locking to take place. However, anti-social behaviour is being reported to the council by residents in the vicinity who are complaining of early hours of the morning gatherings playing loud music. CCTV has been installed and although not fully commissioned and handed over it is recording which shows that intruders are gaining access from Park House. Police are aware and undertaking increased patrols of the area.

Windmill Hill

The trees planted by the WI have established at both locations within the site. The wild flower planting continues to establish itself although ragwort has again grown across the site. The pulling of the ragwort was scheduled to be undertaken on 12th August following which the local farmer will be cutting and baling the grass in line with normal housekeeping regime in place for this open space.

The area remains a popular attraction for residents and dog walkers alike.

Kings Pond

There have been several incidents whereby ill-informed but, no doubt, well-intentioned members of the public have carried out unauthorised works at this location which included the hacking down of hazel leaving the detritus laying on the ground and the removing of

algae from the weir and leaving it on the ground adjacent to the weir. This has resulted in an odious covering of a sludge like substance which given the wet weather has led to it becoming “jellified”. The grounds team have now removed it from site.

8.6 Play Areas:

Play area inspections continue to be undertaken on a monthly basis by our external contractor and reports produced. All defects identified and replacement parts required are actioned. The new “older children’s swings” were due to be installed at the end of July by Vitaplay, who have confirmed that the swings were shipped on 14th July, but they are currently sat at customs waiting to be released. Customs have all the paperwork they need but no delivery date confirmed as yet.

Holybourne Village Association have been consulted on the tender received for the new refurbished play area. Preferred supplier has been notified and installation dates awaited.

8.7 Town Centre:

The Town Centre planting was undertaken with annuals enhancing the established perennial planting in situ throughout the town. The Town Hall and Assembly Rooms window boxes have been planted up with annuals along with railing planters on Crown Hill and the Assembly Room lawns.

The Market Square seating area with the provision of circular tables have proved to be highly successful, as have the two tables put out on the Lawn at the Assembly Rooms.

Two additional circular benches (one for the Market Square and one for the Assembly Rooms lawn) have been ordered together with a number of new planters to replace the 2 broken planters in Normandy Street and the Jane Austen planter at The Butts.

8.8 Benches & Litter Bins

The grounds team have undertaken a number of installations of new litter bins benches throughout the spring and summer and details were provided in the last Grounds Team report.

ITEM 9 ALLOTMENTS REPORT REPORT BY THE ALLOTMENTS OFFICER

FOR INFORMATION

9.1 Following the monthly inspections it has been agreed with the Site Representatives and the Senior Groundsman that the green waste collections will recommence at the autumn followed by the general waste collection later in the year.

9.2 Plots Administration Overview as at 19th August 2021

Monthly inspections have continued since the first inspection in March and all the sites have seen improvements to the work carried out and the general maintenance on the plots.

Since the first inspection in March twenty-one “first letters” have been sent to ploholders asking them to improve their plot by the next inspection. Out of the twenty-one three have resulted in “second letters” being sent, giving the plot holder until the next inspection, approximately four/five weeks, to improve the plot or their tenancy will be terminated. *[Inspections are carried out on the third Wednesday of each month.]*

Following the letters notice has been given either by the plot holder or the Town Council and five plots will be vacant as of the 31st August. These will be cleared by the Grounds Team and offered to the next people on the waiting list.

There are currently 76 on the waiting lists. (Some applicants have their name down for more than one site) which will be reduced slightly with the reallocation as detailed above.

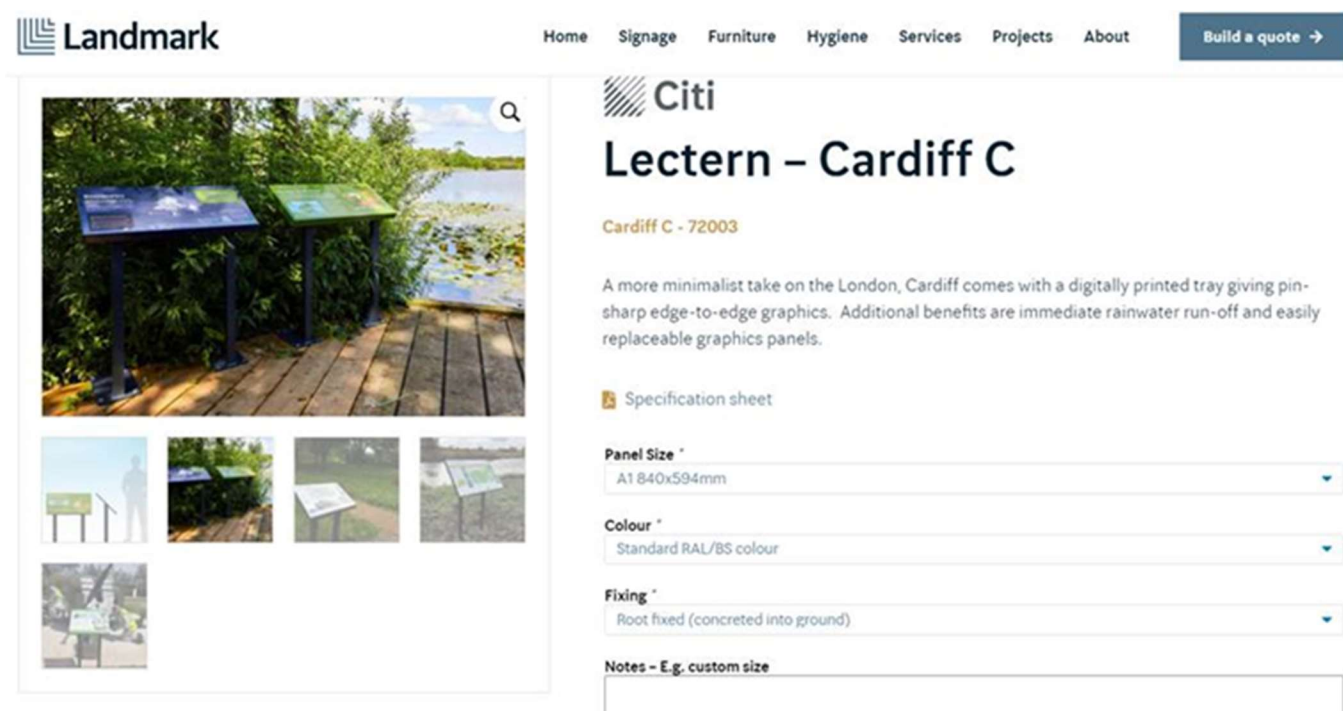
RECOMMENDATION: This report is for information only.

ITEM 10 THE BUTTS INTERPRETATION PANEL

FOR DECISION

This item was requested by Councillor Boxall and is a request to prepare and install an interpretation panel, similar to others installed by the Council around the Town, at the Butts to inform people of the history of this piece of common land, the fair charter upon it and other interesting information. It is recommended that liaison with Jane Hurst is undertaken and the panel be similar in design to that installed for the tank trap at the other end of the Butts or the existing one on the Butts for the Six Hills.

The cost of the panel is £550 plus installation costs and Councillor Boxall is happy to contribute £250 towards the cost.



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Citi Lectern – Cardiff C

Cardiff C - 72003

A more minimalist take on the London, Cardiff comes with a digitally printed tray giving pin-sharp edge-to-edge graphics. Additional benefits are immediate rainwater run-off and easily replaceable graphics panels.

Specification sheet

Panel Size *
A1 840x594mm

Colour *
Standard RAL/BS colour

Fixing *
Root fixed (concreted into ground)

Notes – E.g. custom size

RECOMMENDATION: Members are requested to consider approval of the interpretation panel.

ITEM 11 VENDORS ON OPEN SPACES

FOR DECISION

The Council's Policy and Resources Committee approved a trial earlier this summer to install a mobile coffee "pod" at the Public Gardens. This is a low carbon, emissions free unit, which is fully removable, serving hot drinks and cake, provided by a local vendor for a fixed weekly fee.

The feedback thus far has been very positive from the public and has proven popular. Enquiries have been received from other vendors seeking information on the ability to trade in this location going forward as well as other locations on town council land.

On that basis and to inform the decision making of the Policy and Resources Committee at its next meeting, this committee is requested to approve putting the request for a coffee pod at the Public Gardens out to tender, seeking to secure a trader for the subsequent 12 months. In discussion with the chair and vice chair about the suitability of other sites for the placement of mobile units or pods, it was felt that only Jubilee Fields and Anstey Park would be suitable given the combination of footfall and aesthetic and therefore these two locations could be added to any tender. The Council would be looking for the combination of best bid for each site, combined with the impact on climate change from the unit, aesthetic and suitability of the offering (being purely drinks and cake, no hot food)

RECOMMENDATION: Members are requested to put this item out to tender with the evaluation, approval of any vendors to be made at the next Policy and Resources Meeting

ITEM 12 FRIENDS OF KING’S POND AND FRIENDS OF THE RIVER WEY TERMS OF REFERENCE & NEXT STEPS FOR DECISION

Enclosed in members bundles are the draft terms of reference for these two new community groups. Please note the Terms of Reference in the bundle name “Friends of King’s Pond” but the Terms of Reference will be the same for both groups.

Members are requested to review the draft Terms of Reference.

Councillor Cristofoli has kindly put himself forward to sit on the Friends of King’s Pond Group and Councillor Jones for the Friends of the River Wey.

An informal networking workshop/launch meeting session is offered to both groups together if they would like to meet with Open Spaces Councillors and officers to discuss the Terms of Reference and discuss operational and management matters at the respective sites.

RECOMMENDATION: Members are invited to approve the Terms of Reference and the appointment of council representatives to each group.

ITEM 13 FRIENDS GROUPS STORAGE FACILITIES FOR DECISION

Members are requested to consider the provision of two metal “cabin” secure storage facilities around 8ft x 6ft for installation at King’s Pond and at Flood Meadows for the storage of volunteer tools and to provide a “base” for each group.

The current Friends group based at Flood Meadows have used a local resident’s garage to store their equipment but this is not likely to remain available going forward.

The newly formed Friends of King’s Pond currently do not have a facility but it was recommended by the Environment Agency representative at a recent meeting, particularly so equipment to assist with the clearing of the weir in the winter can be easily accessible. An indicative image is enclosed.

The budget for each facility would be up to £2,500 and if funds permit will also allow each group to have some tools as needed to help with their work.

RECOMMENDATION: Members are requested to approve the purchase of a secure metal storage facility for each site and tools (should funds permit)

ITEM 14 KING'S POND AND FLOOD MEADOWS MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

FOR DECISION

Members are requested to approve inviting tenders for a review of both management plans which were put in place in 2017 and are due a review in 2022. The tender specification will request bidders look to review the existing plans, work with officers to consider the current position in respect of both sites, review works which have been carried out over the last five years and any new works which should be added to the plan. Tenderers will also be asked to ensure there is a public consultation process as part of the plan which will include a drop-in session for the public and engagement with the Environment Agency. Once the tenders are received and evaluated a recommendation will be brought back to this committee for approval ready for the review in 2022.

RECOMMENDATION: Members are requested to approve the creation of an invitation to tender for the review of the King's Pond and Flood Meadow Management Plans

ITEM 15 PERMANENT CLOSURE OF THROUGH ROAD ANSTEY PARK

FOR DECISION

With the new traffic lights due to be operational at the junction of Anstey Lane and Anstey Road in the next 10 days, members are requested to consider making the temporary barrier installed during the works to prevent rat running through the park, semi-permanent through the installation of a number of substantial planters.

Site tenants have been contacted and the majority were in favour, the only real reservation being from RBL over access in an emergency as one of their key holders comes in from the Anstey Lane entrance, the other side of the barrier.

The planters will be spaced apart to enable cyclists and pedestrians to pass through and to be removed for specific events at the park which require it (a couple of clubs requested that if there was a physical barrier that it could be removed for this purpose on event days when a one-way system is ideal). In addition, the planters will have reflective strips added and signs will need to be erected at the entrances to the park to advise "No through road".

Consideration was given to physical metal (arm) barriers which could still be considered later on as a permanent solution if this works but there are concerns over key holders, vandalism etc..which would need to be thought through.

There is a cost to procuring additional planters at a cost of around £1,000 (total) including delivery (£320 each plus delivery).

They will be weighted down with additional material/soil so they will not be movable by individuals

RECOMMENDATION: Members are requested to consider approval of the installation of planters to replace the barriers currently in place at Anstey Park to

ITEM 16 RESURFACING OF ANSTEY PARK ENTRANCE

FOR DECISION

The Town Clerk has been in contact with James Laver at Hampshire County Council in respect of trying to have pothole and tarmac remedial works undertaken whilst the resurfacing for the Anstey Road/Anstey Lane junction is being carried out. This work is being undertaken imminently and with the approval of the chair and vice chair of the committee this has been given authority to proceed, so this is a retrospective item.

The contractor has agreed to undertake carriageway patching work at the southern access from Anstey Road at a cost of £6,500 as part of the surfacing works for the main scheme.

In respect of the northern access from Anstey Lane; the contractor and HCC site team have looked at patching at the junction/access where the surface is poor, however this area needs some kerbing repairs and footway improvements too. The contractor was not confident in delivering this work within the remaining programme duration and given the significant overrun, it is essential that we do not instruct any additional works which run a risk of adding more prolongation and associated contractual issues to the project. Therefore this work is not to be included as part of the scheme and members may wish to include this as a project for budget workshop for 2022.

RECOMMENDATION: Members are requested to approve the carriageway and pothole repairs to the Anstey Road entrance to the path at a cost of up to £6,500 taken from the maintenance budget for Anstey Park.

ITEM 17 LIONS BENCH

FOR DECISION

Following the last meeting correspondence has been received from Alton Lions stating that they were unable to find a suitable location within Anstey Park for their bench and therefore requested that members consider a number of alternatives listed below.

- 1) Flood Meadows - at the Lenten Street end. There are no benches on the grassy area near, but not very near, the river.
- 2) Another bench on the Butts near the existing one possibly, facing it. This might provide an area of sociable seating where several people could sit together.
- 3) On the grass behind the war memorial. Room would need to be left for an assortment of Marmots at Christmas.

In reviewing the locations with the chair and vice chair, members are requested to consider the placement of the new bench at the Butts but not, as suggested, by the existing bench as there is a concern it will become a “dining” area given the food trading in this location but have recommended to members a location, shown in the photograph, further along the site where an existing bench is currently located but has deteriorated and is due for replacement.



RECOMMENDATION: Members are asking to approve the installation of the bench for the Lions in the revised location at The Butts

ITEM 18 WINDMILL HILL MEMORIAL TOPOSCOPE.

FOR DECISION

Enclosed in members bundles is a visual for a proposed toposcope to be installed at Windmill Hill.

Janet Athis has contacted Alton Town Council regarding seeking permission to install this memorial toposcope in remembrance of her late brother Robert Athis. He was a well-known member of Alton’s walking community and the creator of the Six Hills of Alton walk.

The toposcope would be installed on Windmill Hill and depict the locations of the other five hills of Alton all of which can all be viewed from this unique location.

Janet has been in contact with Paul Ebbutt from Walk Alton who are keen to support the addition of a Six Hills of Alton toposcope which will be designed, and custom made by local company Kemp and Stevens.

This is being provided at no cost to the Town Council

RECOMMENDATION: Members are requested to approve the installation of the toposcope at Windmill Hill