

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, 24th NOVEMBER 2021
HELD IN THE TOWN HALL FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Present: **Councillor** **Suzie Burns** - **Chair**
 Graham Hill - **Vice Chair**
 Ginny Boxall
 Gideon Cristofoli
 Paul Crossley
 Sharon Cullen
 Lewis Jones

In attendance:

Mrs Pat Harris - **Finance & Administration Manager**
Ms Wendy Simson - **Assistant to the Town Clerk**

2 members of the Public – 2 in person and 2 via Zoom
Councillor Pam Jones – via Zoom
District Councillor Paula Langley (Minute 202 at 8.39 p.m.)

190 Chair's announcements

The Chair made the following announcements:

1. Welcomed Councillor Lewis Jones to the Open Spaces Committee
2. Reminded the Committee that the council's open spaces are in "transition" phase as we head into the autumn/winter playing seasons and focus on football and rugby pitch preparation and the winter maintenance programme commences for all other open spaces.
3. Wished to formally congratulate Martin Whapshott (Senior Groundsman) and Richard Myers (Alton Cricket Club) on winning "Ground of the Year" as awarded by the Southern Premier Cricket League for Jubilee Playing Fields which reflects the joint partnership approach between the two which contributed to this success
4. Reminded Members in the Chamber that if they wished to speak; they should raise their hand and the Chair will invite them to speak. For those attending the meeting via zoom, to remain on mute and either raise their hand or use the "electronic hand" and the Chair, again, will invite them to speak at which time they can unmute

191 Apologies

There were no apologies as all committee members were present.

192 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting of 25th August 2021 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

193 Declarations of interest and Requests for Dispensation

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

Lewis Jones advised of a personal interest in that he is currently the President of Alton Cricket Club and a long-standing member of the Alton Rugby Club.

194 Pump Track Presentation and Public Consultation

The Committee received a presentation from Matt Stevens and Bill Farrington, community representatives on the Pump Track Task & Finish Group – which is appended to the Minutes.

Members raised a number of questions as to the size of track being looked at. In relation to the Basingstoke Pump Track at Memorial Park (which had been used as an example in the presentation) they were pleased to learn that the company who built that one had super-imposed the design onto the area identified at Anstey Park and that it was a “good fit”. Other questions raised included contractors (and materials to be used) who specialise in this kind of infrastructure, life expectancy for such a facility, would it have lighting, costs and grant availability.

Members were advised and understood that the answers to such questions would come out of the public consultation which is to be held and further investigations which would take place prior to an Invitation to Tender being issued.

Councillor Pam Jones requested to have recorded that she fully supports the move to the new location and wished to thank Steve and Bill for their input to the Task & Finish Group and putting together the presentation as received this evening.

On the proposal of Councillor Graham Hill, seconded by Councillor Sharon Cullen it was

RESOLVED to approve the change in proposed location “in principle” to Anstey Park subject to public consultation and to proceed to the invitation to tender process. The project and funding approval to be referred to Full Council in Spring/Summer 2022

All councillors voted in favour

195 Questions and representations from Members of the Public

The following representation had been received in writing and was published with the agenda papers:

1. Correspondence from a local Environmental Scientist

Good afternoon, as a resident of Alton, I would like to congratulate you on this year's mowing regime in our green spaces! I think the way that the Flood Meadows are maintained both for people and wildlife to use is exemplary. This year, I'm also very happy to see that the fenced off meadow around the water works by the Flood Meadows was not cut too often, allowing the summer flowers to fully blossom and seed and thus providing a great food source for our insects, bats and birds. I was also extremely pleased with the approach to the meadow area at Kings Pond this year. It's a bold decision to keep an area like this, which is heavily frequented by humans, as wild as it has been kept this year. There has been a marked increase of insects and with that came more swifts, martins and bats feeding above it - a joy to watch! I look forward to seeing this meadow managed for wildlife like this in the future!

I'm aware that the council probably often only hears from people who have something to complain about, so I wanted to share this positive feedback! I'm happy to see that the idea of creating space for nature has been brought to fruition like this in our town and I hope that this approach will be maintained and built upon in the future.

NOTED

Additional representations received after publication of the Agenda papers:

1. Resident: Complaint re Jubilee Playing Fields, Skate Park

Noise complaint raised with Ward Councillor Ginny Boxall by two residents on the Crest Nicholson development (opposite the skate park) relating to loud music and noise being created by users of the facility after the floodlights turn off at 8.00 p.m. Councillor Ginny Boxall is to raise the issue with Crest Nicholson at the next Liaison Panel meeting which is scheduled for December.

Councillor Ginny Boxall confirmed that she was in e-mail dialogue with the residents and there were actually four residents affected by the nuisance. Councillor Graham Hill advised that Environmental Health at EHDC should also be contacted for their input.

NOTED

2. Resident: Mr Anthony Furnival: (circulated to all Committee Members prior to the meeting)

Please could you provide a zoom code for the next OSC meeting. I have family over that day so not 100% sure I can make it but would like the option. Please however could you consider the following two representations and have them read out at the appropriate point.

Whilst decorative, full size notice boards can and have been be vandalised in other areas (outside of Alton) and given the high levels of anti-social behaviour of late at Kings Pond, I'm concerned they'll be targeted. Furthermore, if made of wood they'll require periodic treatment and maintenance. Whilst more flexible (in that messages can be changed) I'd question how much impact they could have if only sited at 2 of 3 locations on long term messages such as dogs being on leads. I personally favour the metal signs but if both options are available together then that could be an option, though in such circumstances I'd foresee the notice boards being more of a seasonal thing rather than pushing permanent messages.

I really question the need for a new management plan. Very little work was undertaken from the last plan commissioned and I feel that throwing thousands of pounds into yet more reports which in theory will say similar things to the last without a guarantee of action is a waste of money. The pond hasn't vastly changed since the last report - so the benefits of a new report are few. Furthermore, given that the new Kings Pond steering group is in its infancy, I feel some discussion among the group based on previous recommendations in the last report alongside the fresh ideas and expertise members bring to the group could be a useful exercise. The residents group is a free resource to the council and this could free up £3000 (or more) which could be better spent around the

pond on projects to enhance and improve the space. Equally I think it's a bit of a metaphorical middle finger to the group who have been encouraged to put forward ideas only to commission a report before said ideas can be explored. I think any report should be deferred for the foreseeable future whilst the group establishes itself.

NOTED

3. Mr John Quincey – duplication of the representation from Mr. Furnival

NOTED

4. Councillor Pam Jones provided a verbal update on behalf of the Friends of the River Way and advised:
- They were busy establishing the Committee, choosing officers and reviewing current activities in connection with the river
 - Two important items shared were the proposed Heritage Trail on the Brewery site and the need for an initial assessment of work likely to be needed on Will Hall Meadow in 2022/3
 - A draft report was currently being prepared on the latter which it is hoped they will be able to share before Christmas
 - We've also set a date for the next meeting in January 2022 when we hope to recommend our view of the priorities for the ensuing financial year
5. Mr. John Quincey wished clarification as to why the council were looking to undertake and award a contract to review the Management Plans for Kings Pond and Flood Meadows and believes that nothing should be done and disagrees with the council looking to award this contract. The Chair re-iterated the council's position with regards that the existing management plans are 5 years old and that both Kings Pond, Flood Meadows and the recently transferred Lower Field have changed during that time and that a review is necessary. Mr Quincey stated he believed it was a waste of time and money as ATC had not implemented the previous plan; he does not believe they have a management maintenance plan and the council needs to spend money on Kings Pond stating the paths are inadequate and are dangerous. Mr. Quincey's strong objection was noted.
6. Mr. Furnival was advised that his representation had been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting but for clarification it had not been read out.

196 Grounds Team Report

The Committee received the Grounds Team Report and noted its comprehensive content. And requested that its thanks to the team be formally noted in the Minutes praising their commitment in the maintenance of the council's open spaces. Members did, however, raise concerns that with the council taking on additional open space the grounds team appeared stretched but were re-assured that the Staffing Committee were currently reviewing staffing levels and that plans were in play. Councillor Gideon Cristofoli believes that the weir at Kings Pond needs to be cleared daily and the current maintenance regime for clearance should be increased to reflect this.

NOTED

197 Allotments Report

The Committee received the Allotments Report and extended its appreciation of the work that is undertaken by the Allotment Association. The Committee requested that they be provided with details of how many people are on the waiting list following renewals due at the end of the year. Officers agreed that this detail would be provided at the next meeting.

NOTED

198 Landlords Consent for Signage at Anstey Park

A request had been made to the Town Council by the Business Development Manager at Energique for permission to erect new signage on the building – full details were included in the Agenda papers circulated to Members.

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

RESOLVED to

Grant landlord consent for an illuminated sign at Energique: Front entrance, LED illuminated 2-part tray sign with customised artwork measuring 2800 x 800 mm. Sign lighting output - 380 lumens per meter, total of 6 meters of LED required Proposed total output of light would be 2280 lumens

All councillors voted in favour

199 King's Pond and Flood Meadows Management Plan Review

The responses to the Invitation to Tender for this contract had been circulated to councillors under Confidential as information contained therein was commercially sensitive.

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

RESOLVED to approve the appointment of:

- 1. Aquamaintain to undertake the King's Pond and Flood Meadows Management Plan review commencing in April 2022 in the sum of £3,000 net.**
- 2. Subject to cost agreement, to extend the contract to enable the appointed company (Aquamaintain) to create a management plan for the land known as the Lower Field, (Will Hall Meadow.)**

**Councillors Suzie Burns, Graham Hill, Ginny Boxall, Paul Crossley, Sharon Cullen & Lewis Jones voted in favour.
Councillor Gideon Cristofoli abstained**

200 Current Projects

The following updates were received:

200.1 Flood Meadows – Storage Facility

A new metal storage container has been purchased by the Town Council and has been installed at Flood Meadows. The Alton Society expressed their extreme gratitude as this will assist them greatly with having hand tools and equipment to hand when carrying out their scheduled works on site.

NOTED

200.2 Will Hall Farm Lower Fields

Aquamaintain commenced the riverbank and path repair works at Flood Meadows on 22nd November. Advance notification that the riverside pathway will be closed for approximately three weeks were erected on Tuesday, 16th November.

NOTED

200.3 Will Hall Farm, Lower Field

It is confirmed that the transfer of the land to Alton Town Council has now been completed. Redrow will be permitted access to the site for remedial tree planting works over the winter and to remove the advertising hoardings next year. A grant of £500 was presented to the Mayor before the last Full Council meeting from the Alton Buildings Preservation Trust towards the cost of boundary hedge planting which will be undertaken in the New Year. Alton Town Council have conveyed its thanks to them for this generous donation

NOTED

200.4 Holybourne Pond

Planning permission has been granted by EHDC for the tree works requested at the pond to be undertaken. Quotes are currently being obtained for the works, to be undertaken over the winter using the funds previously approved by Members.

NOTED

201 King's Pond**201.1 Review of Feeding and Rat Control**

Further to the Resolution made at the last meeting of the Open Spaces Committee in August (Minute 106.1.1 refers) it was stated at the time that the impact of the measures approved, which included pest control contractors and use of the EHDC Environmental Enforcement Team would be reviewed. Members duly received a report from the Town Clerk as included with the Agenda papers.

Councillor Gideon Cristofoli requested that he be advised of the total costs incurred to date with engaging EHDC Enforcement Patrols and Pest Control contractors. Officers confirmed that this information would be circulated to all members of the committee.

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

RESOLVED to

1. Continue with pest control until the Spring of 2022, with a further review at the next meeting in February.
2. Feeding only on the water notices to be displayed
3. Cease the Educational Programme and not re-engage the EHDC Environmental Enforcement Team

All councillors voted in favour

201.2 Signage

Following complaints received for and against the erection of temporary signage at King's Pond the Committee were advised that it was clear that a balance needs to be struck. It was being suggested that either two or three noticeboard boards be installed at the key entry points to the pond combining the details of the permanent messaging which needs to be conveyed with temporary or seasonal messaging and details of happenings at the pond.

Councillor Lewis Jones asked whether any investigation had been undertaken on solar powered electronic boards and whether this would be appropriate given that they could be digitally updated.

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

RESOLVED to

Approve the installation of up to 3 man-made composite notice boards at the main entrances to the sites, asking the Friends group for their views on preferred design.

All councillors voted in favour

201.3 PSPOs

Members noted the Town Clerk's update as tabled.

NOTED

201.4 Access for people with Disabilities

Members noted that some difficulty was being experienced in gaining access to the pond utilising the entrance by Waterside Court.

On the proposal of Councillor Gideon Cristofoli, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill it was

RESOLVED to

Approve the removal of the metal barrier at the entrance to Kings Pond by Waterside Court subject to the necessary consents from relevant stakeholders, including seeking the advice of officers at East Hampshire District Council.

All councillors voted in favour

202 Friends of King's Pond Meeting Minutes

The Friends of King's Pond Meeting Minutes were received. Councillor Gideon Cristofoli advised that a positive meeting had been held between himself, Paula Langley, Councillors Suzie Burns, Councillor Graham Hill and the Town Clerk during which it had been agreed that consultation, transparency and two-way communication was essential for the future success of the group. Members noted that a further meeting of the group was yet to be organised at which Councillor Cristofoli would advise of the feedback from the meeting he and Paula Langley had attended.

NOTED

203 Friends of the River Wey Meeting Minutes

Councillor Pam Jones had provided an update on the Friends of the River Wey meeting – Minute 195.4 refers.

NOTED

204 Barrier at Anstey Park

The Town Clerk had received representations from both the Rugby Club and Football club raising concerns that emergency services are accessing the Anstey Park off Anstey Lane only to be confronted with the barrier obstructing their way. Unnecessary delay in attending an incident is caused by their having to turn around and negotiating the traffic signals at the junction and then coming into Anstey Park off Anstey Road.

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

RESOLVED to approve the removal of the barrier planter in Anstey Park and advise all clubs and businesses who operate out of Anstey Park

Councillors Suzie Burns, Graham Hill, Ginny Boxall, Paul Crossley, Sharon Cullen & Gideon Cristofoli voted in favour.

Councillor Lewis Jones abstained

205 To receive Meeting Notes

The Meeting Notes were received as tabled without amendment:

Walk Alton Minutes - 20th October 2021

Walk Alton Annual General Meeting - 20th October 2021

Councillors commended the extremely active members of Walk Alton and congratulated them on their aspirations of 100 walks for the 2022 Walking Festival.

NOTED

The meeting closed at 8.43 p.m.