

**ALTON TOWN COUNCIL
OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, 28th SEPTEMBER 2022
HELD IN THE TOWN HALL**

Present: **Councillor** **Suzie Burns** - **Chair**
 Graham Hill - **Vice Chair**
 Matthew Bayliss
 Lewis Jones

In attendance:

Mrs Leah Coney - **Town Clerk**
 Mrs Pat Harris - **Finance & Administration Manager**
 7 members of the Public

82 Chair's announcements

The Chair made the following announcements:

1. Welcomed Councillor Matthew Bayliss to the Open Spaces Committee
2. As winter approaches and the temperature drops it's a good time to reflect on the huge amount of use that open spaces across the town have received over the summer months. When the committee last met little had we known that we would be entering a period of extended drought, seeing some of the hottest temperatures on record. It's difficult to now recall the parched earth and brown grass that became a feature of most gardens and open spaces at the time. It was great to see the open spaces spring back to vibrancy with just a little rain and now we enter the final cut season, it all seems to have flown by just a little too quickly.
3. The officer team have continued to do a superb job of encouraging groups to use our open spaces over the summer period. Of note the Hillman Imp Club Meet used Anstey Park as a congregation point and camp ground, as did the Kennet Flyball Club in staging their competition at the Diggers at Anstey – what a super opportunity for our local community to welcome so many visitors to the town. In addition, Alton Cricket club batted to victory on the award-winning Jubilee ground to see them return to the top flight of non-professional cricket.
4. As always, my thanks to the hardworking team and co-ordinating officers who work so hard to ensure that so many individuals and groups can continue to use and enjoy our open spaces.

83 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Paul Crossley & Sharon Cullen. Councillor Amanda Durley did not attend.

84 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting of 29th June 2022 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

85 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 made.

86 Questions and representations from Members of the Public

1. Correspondence from Mr. Clark "In view of the passing of our Queen, would the ATC consider renaming Anstey Park, Elizabeth Park in her honour"?
In response: Councillors agreed that it was not appropriate to rename Anstey Park, however, as a Council they would be looking to commemorate the Queen and perhaps a new garden in her name would be ideal.
2. Charles Kaye, Chair of the Friends of the River Way asked whether the planting at St. Lawrence would be discussed and it was confirmed it was on the agenda for this evening's meeting
3. Correspondence from Mr. Anthony Furnival re: Canada geese;

The topic of geese and subjective claims on population have been repeatedly made at OSC. I would remind councillors of the following; without any statistical data taken over winter which is the only time you can accurately record resident populations (I.e those that breed at the pond and are not part of the nomadic visiting population in the summer) it is impossible to make an objective assessment of population - you cannot and will never be able to control the nomadic population as this number fluctuates daily and isn't made up of the exact same birds on a day-to-day basis. I've made the suggestion about data collection for the last two years so as any decision making is evidence led rather than being based on the views of a few councillors. To this note, public opinion has not been sought on radically redefining the waterfowl population, there are ethical and legal concerns as to how ATC have conducted former management techniques and the main issue appears to be about faecal deposits on the paths - paths which have no maintenance plan for cleaning which is a huge anomaly compared to other local authorities who manage similar spaces. Whilst egg oiling (if done correctly) is acceptable, translocation is hugely flawed and has legal ramifications which I do not believe with my extensive work with wildlife and authorities can be satisfied. I'll provide details soon on these issues based on my past experience.

More information will be passed over to town hall as and when I can, as such I'd recommend that you defer any formal decision on goose population until such a time as this and other information you may want to collect can be collated, and I'd again urge that you start collecting meaningful statistical data - I can advise on the best way to do this.

4. Councillor Matthew Bayliss referred to the Yew tree planting on the Butts roundabout which had died and what progress had been made as to remedial action being taken. The Town Clerk confirmed that the matter was with County Councillor Andrew Joy as the issue was over responsibility with neither the developer Knights Brown or the County assuming such responsibility for the planting. The Committee agreed that a three-tiered approach was required and a letter be drafted to be signed by all councillors of Alton Town Council, District Council and the County Councillor plus our MP, Damien Hinds. The Town Clerk will draft and present to Councillors to sign off

No further questions were received on the evening,

87 Flood Meadows Draft Management Plan

Members had received the draft updated Management Plan for Flood Meadows which had been reviewed by members of the Friends of the River Wey and their comments forwarded to councillors. Members also received the proposed draft questions for the Consultation for review and comment.

Members noted the interactive drop-in sessions at Flood Meadows are proposed to run on the following dates:

Thursday, 13th October 10.00 a.m.-11.00 a.m.

Sunday, 16th October 10.00 a.m. -11.00 a.m.

Friday, 21st October 3.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.

The Committee requested that an evening drop-in session should also be included and it was agreed that this would take place on:

Wednesday, 26th October 5.00 p.m. – 7.00 p.m. at the Town Hall

It was also requested that an additional question be added to the questionnaire “*How did you hear about this Consultation*” which would provide useful data as to the best means of advising of public consultations in the future.

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

RESOLVED to

- (i) Approve the Draft document ready to go out to Public Consultation**
- (ii) Approve the questions for the survey questionnaire with the additional question added “How did you hear about this Consultation?”**

87 Grounds Team Report

The Committee received the Grounds Team Report and noted its comprehensive content and wished to record their huge thanks to the Ground Team as the Council’s open spaces are maintained to a very high standard.

The Committee also noted the actions being taken out following the Council’s external Health & Safety audit and visit to the Council’s sites where there is open water which included signage affixed to the dipping platform at Flood Meadows and the removal of the tarmac areas in front of the two feeding stations at King’s Pond as well as the installation of 3 floatation rings; 2 at Kings Pond and 1 at Flood Meadows which have been ordered and delivery awaited.

NOTED

88 King’s Pond Draft Management Plan

The tabling of the Draft Management Plan for King’s Pond was deferred from the last meeting following a request from the Friends of King’s Pond for further information to be included in the plan, in particular adducing evidence of where the rationale for the “primary objective” had been

obtained. As a result, the Environment Agency wrote to the Town Council detailing why this was their preferred option and this has now been included in the draft plan.

The draft management plan was tabled for the committee to consider prior to proceeding with a public consultation. This is proposed to run from Monday October 17th until Sunday 27th November.

Interactive drop-in sessions at King's Pond will run on the following dates:

Tuesday 25th October 2pm – 3pm
Sunday 30th October 10am – 11am
Wednesday 2nd November 10am – 11am
Monday 7th November 1pm – 2pm

There will also be a static display and drop-in sessions at the Alton Assembly Rooms on

Friday 18th November from 3pm – 7pm
Saturday 19th November 10am – 12noon

Also included in Members bundles are the draft questions for the on-line consultation on Survey Monkey (paper copies will be available at the Town Hall for those without internet access), which were tabled for approval.

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

RESOLVED

- (i) To approve the Draft King's Pond Management Plan
- (ii) To approve the proposed survey questions with the additional question added "How did you hear about this Consultation?"

89 Current Projects

89.1 Container for the Public Gardens.

- Members were requested to consider the purchase of a small metal container for the storage of third-party equipment at the Public Gardens at a cost of £1,777 including delivery.

89.2 Holybourne Pond Replacement Fencing

Members were requested to consider a request from the Holybourne Village Association via Councillor Hill for replacement post and rail fencing at Holybourne Pond. Full details of the two quotes obtained were contained within Member's bundles. Prices were only requested for the stretch of fence along the road side frontage, where a barrier is required to prevent vehicles and/or pedestrians accessing the pond and not along the entire length (i.e where it passes through the church).

Councillor Hill also requested that the Committee consider a further £500 grant to cover the material costs for the Friends of Holybourne Pond to carry out additional maintenance works to prevent cars parking on the small area of land which forms the pedestrian entrance to the pond and the seating area.

On the proposal of Councillor Graham Hill, seconded by Councillor Matthew Bayliss it was

RESOLVED to

Amend the motion to £2,500 to include the purchase of the replacement fencing together with other materials for maintenance work at Holybourne Pond

On the proposal of Councillor Graham Hill, seconded by Councillor Suzie Burns it was

RESOLVED to

- (i) Approve the purchase of a small metal container at a cost of £1,777 which includes delivery**
- (ii) Approve the purchase of the replacement fencing together with other materials for maintenance work at Holybourne Pond at a cost £2,500**

90 St. Lawrence Church – Eco Church Project

Members received a proposal from St Lawrence Church to undertake environmental planting in the Churchyard. This would not impact use of the site and would be at no cost to the Council with volunteers maintaining the spaces. As a closed burial ground with the Town Council responsible for grounds maintenance, permission is required from ATC prior to the works going ahead as well as from the diocese.

On the proposal of Councillor Lewis Jones, seconded by Councillor Suzie Burns it was

RESOLVED

To give consent to St Lawrence Church for the proposed environmental planting in the Churchyard

91 ACAN proposal for Anstey Park

Members received a proposal from Alton Climate Action Network in respect of rewilding and undertake environment enhancements at Anstey Park. Following in depth discussion it was concluded that Anstey Park was not suitable for all of the five proposals put forward and that further discussions could be held as to other open spaces where the proposals would be more appropriate.

On the proposal of Councillor Matthew Bayliss, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill it was

RESOLVED to

Amend the motion by:

- (i) Putting forward Proposal 2 at Anstey Park to in-filling only of the hedgerow**
- (ii) Removing Proposals 1, 3, 4, 5 with discussions to take place with officers as to more suitable locations for these proposals at open spaces within the Council's portfolio**

Councillor Lewis Jones abstained
Councillors Suzie Burns, Matthew Bayliss & Graham Hill voted
in favour

Therefore, on the proposal of Councillor Matthew Bayliss, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill it was

RESOLVED

- (i) To agree the in-filling planting of the hedgerow at Anstey Park
- (ii) To undertake further discussions with officers as to the suitability at other alternative Council's open spaces for proposals 1, 3, 4 and 5 put forward by ACAN to undertake planting of new hedging, an orchard and a meadow/wild area

90 Friends of the River Wey Report

A report from the Friends of the River Wey was tabled. The Chair, Charles Kaye was present at the meeting and was able to provide further updates and respond to questions raised by the Committee.

NOTED

91 Exclusion of the Press & Public

On the proposal of Councillor Suzie Burns, seconded by Councillor Graham Hill, it was

RESOLVED

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

92 Open Spaces Patrols

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The meeting closed at 9.08 p.m.