

Present: Councillor Ginny Boxall Town Mayor
Suzie Burns
Sharon Cullen
Paul Crossley
Graham Hill
Lewis Jones

Leah Coney - Town Clerk
County Councillor Andrew Joy
Dom Clarke –The King’s Arms
1 member of the public
1 member of the press.

Apologies were received from District Councillor Stephen Dolan, Councillor Matthew Bayliss, Amanda Durley, Christopher Lawrence, Pam Jones, Graham Titterington and Richard Platt

There were no announcements

There were no Leaders Announcements

The Minutes of the meetings held on the 27th April 2022 were approved and were signed by the Town Mayor.

There were no declarations.

1. Mr Andrew Joy in person. Commended members on their commitment to council business. He wished to raise the following concerns.

- a) King's Pond, which should be a "jewel in the crown" attraction for visitors and residents due to its wildlife and vegetation but is in a dreadful state in respect of the amount of the quantity of the goose poo
 - b) Pump Track he is concerned that the Pump Track is using a substantial amount of public funds on an incredibly niche group and only benefits a very small demographic within the town when it could be spent on other items.
 - c) Delegation on Planning matters. He is concerned that the Council in delegating authority to officers will not be able to represent the local community if this goes ahead. Members must be committed and available to meaningfully represent at district planning for major applications.
2. Mr Gideon Cristofoli (received in writing responses in italics were read out by the Chair)
1. Can the council please advise why the cost to the council has increased from an estimated £40,000 to £115,000 for the pump track.
*In the budget for 2022/23 approved by Full Council on 2nd February 2022 it was clearly stated the cost of the Pump Track would be £80,000, it was never £40,000
The pump track has come in on budget, the additional amount raised through grant applications is to cover the cost of floodlighting which has now been added following the public consultation which showed 89% of respondents in favour.*
 2. As the council appears to be relying upon a consultation with the public in which it stated it would not be using taxpayers money, will the council now be undertaking a new consultation where they make clear that it is council funds which are being used to pay for the pump track project estimated to cost £115,000. It is very clear from social media that many people were misled by the wording of the consultation.
The Council is not using any monies it has obtained from the taxpayer through the precept it levies. £40,000 is coming from funds received from a commercial lease of land for a telecoms company; £57,450 from Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which is wholly funded by housing and commercial developments within East Hampshire and the remaining £17,500 from a grant application made to the Supporting Communities fund at EHDC.
 3. Can the council please explain why they have refused to allocate sufficient funds to maintain Kings Pond and other open spaces on the basis of a lack of funds and yet a are prepared to spend £115,000 on the pump track project which is a minority sport for a very narrow section of Altonians. it is clear from estimates that Kings Pond could be dredged for the cost of £115,000 and yet the council has decided to build a new facility without any knowledge or research into how often it will be used and by what number of people.

The budget set by the Council for 2022/23 for open spaces, including grounds staff costs is just over £500,000.

There is no evidence to suggest that cycling is a minority sport – in fact nearly half of the population of the UK aged 5 and over own or have access to a bicycle. There are hundreds of pump tracks across the UK and one leading UK supplier has stated that having been building pump tracks around the world for over a decade throughout that time they have witnessed the ability pump tracks have to transform communities and lives by making cycling more accessible.

4. Can the council please explain what provisions are being made to maintain the pump track so as to avoid it becoming dilapidated like many of the other Council assets.

The pump track will be regularly inspected with the same regime as the other play areas and skateparks. There is an approved budget code for this. The riding surface should be good for 10 – 15 years. A capital reserve already exists within Council funds for replacements and/or upgrades in time. It is also anticipated that an earmarked reserve specifically for play areas and skateparks is created in the next financial year.

5. If the council are able to find £115,000 for the pump track project why are they so reluctant to spend a small sum on purchasing cleaning equipment for Kings Ponds path. As has been pointed out on many occasions there are some very dangerous pathogens contained within goose poo that could be very harmful to the public and this issue needs actioning now.

The “cleaning equipment for King’s Pond” referred to is for a jet wash requested by the Chair of King’s Pond last month to remove goose poo from paths. This is yet to be debated by the Open Spaces committee so it would be incorrect to say the council are reluctant as it has not yet been discussed. Indeed, the Chair of the Friends of Kings Pond will confirm that after his research, this item will be up for discussion on the next Open Spaces Agenda given both the initial cost of several thousand pounds and the impact on operational personnel. The pro’s and cons of such equipment will be fully explored before being presented to members.

6. Can the council please advise what total sum of financial reserves it currently holds

The balance sheet as at 30th June shows reserves of £683,470. Of this £553,979 is earmarked either for specific sites as commuted sums from developers, projects and/or capital replacements. This leaves a contingency reserve of £129,491 which represents three months basic operating costs in accordance with best practice.

64 **Capital Works for Approval**

64.1 Anstey Park Play Area surfacing for ratification

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

RESOLVED to approve £19,387 CIL funds for the resurfacing of the play area at Anstey Park

64.2 Anstey Park Pump Track

Councillor Hill wished to commend officers on the level of work which had gone into preparing this item but had concerns, namely the consultation may have given a misleading result as it was fundamentally flawed. It said the pump track was not using taxpayers’ money and whilst it is correct that precept money is not being used, this council is using public money. He was also concerned that this was incredibly niche for only a very few specialist users in the community with expensive “pump bikes”. He felt that many, many more people

use King's Pond than would use a pump track. There is already a skatepark at Jubilee and Anstey Park so this facility was not needed and he was therefore not in favour.

Councillor Burns responded that could the consultation have been phrased better? Possibly, but the overwhelming positive nature of comments was clear so it is unlikely to have affected the outcome. King's Pond is absolutely an asset but much of the funding for this project could not have been spent on maintenance of the pond as it is coming from developers through CIL. She didn't think the pump track is for a niche market; it will sit nicely next to the playground for children as well as adults and young adults. Do more people use King's Pond than Anstey Park; debatable.

Councillor Jones said he did not think this was niche at all and cannot accept that this Council would have to make some sort of binary decision between one site and another. It is not an either or. He felt the pump track will be a superb asset and this Council will regret it if the project does not proceed. He said he does not subscribe to the social media rhetoric on this but does walk around his ward and talk to people who have said they are all in favour – bring it on!

Councillor Crossly felt there is genuine misunderstanding over this facility; almost any bike can use this facility. Pump track users are the largest growth group in the community as this type of facility provides the next best thing to a mountain bike track in a confined space. This Council wants to encourage cycling and this will help. He could not see that this is to the detriment to anything which will be undertaken at King's Pond. He concluded that Anstey Park is used throughout the year, the lighting makes perfect sense.

Councillor Cullen said she completely supported the pump track.

Councillor Hill said the message is loud and clear that this meeting sees of the importance of King's Pond and it needs more attention. He would like to see the lighting deferred a year or 6 months until the usage can be seen to see whether it needs lighting or not.

The Town Clerk was asked to confirm what "in principle" meant in terms of the lighting. She responded that it would mean that officers would continue to develop the lighting element of the scheme, ensure the funding is secured, go through any procurement process required and bring back to Full Council for approval at the appropriate time. It was further noted that funding will need to be spent within one year of award of grant, so this would in practice mean the February 2023 meeting would be the aim.

Councillor Boxall commented that she is in favour and thinks it will be well used. She took on board the comments about use of the word "taxpayers" money in the consultation but overall the majority of comments were supportive of the project.

On the proposal of Councillor Lewis Jones seconded by Councillor Paul Crossley it was :

RESOLVED to approve:

The contractor for the Pump Track at a cost of £80,000, utilising the £40,000 held in reserves and District CIL (subject to this funding being confirmed by EHDC Full Council on 28th July)

In Favour: Councillor Boxall, Burns, Crossley, Cullen and Jones

Against: Councillor Hill

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

RESOLVED to approve:

“In principle “ a solar flood lighting scheme to be developed for the site as a second phase of works, subject to available funding and design.

65 **Youth Project – updated report by Dom Clarke**

The report by Dom Clarke, Senior Youth Worker was tabled. Mr Clarke said he was really pleased that the Council supported the Pump Track and that the young people would really appreciate it.

Members took the opportunity to ask questions of Dom over capacity, staffing, provision for those age 18+ and funding. Members were pleased to learn of the extent of the services offered in supporting the youth of Alton but were also keen to understand if there was more support that the Town Council could give. Mr Clarke would take this back and respond in due course. The Committee thanked Dom for his attendance at the meeting and asked that these be passed on to all concerned.

NOTED

66 **Planning and Transport Committee scheme of delegation and Town Clerk scheme of delegation.**

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

RESOLVED to ratify

1) The scheme of delegation in respect of the Planning and Transport Committee for a trial period of 6 months. To be reviewed by Full Council in February 2023 and;

2) The Town Council Scheme of Delegation to the Town Clerk

67 **Statement of Accounts to 30th June 2022**

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

RESOLVED to approve:

1) The balance sheet dated 30th June 2022

2) The Income and Expenditure account to 30th June 2022

3) The bank reconciliations for the Unity Account and the CCLA Deposit Account

4) The Payments over £500 covering 1st April 2022 to 30th June 2022

5) The Financial Risk Assessment 2022/23

6) The Internal Audit Report to 30th June 2022

68 **Alton and District Community Resilience Fund Update**

The Alton & District Community Resilience Fund Panel report was tabled.

On the proposal of Councillor Lewis Jones, seconded by Councillor Paul Crossley it was

RESOLVED to approve:

- 1) To direct the panel to no longer accept donations to the fund to ensure its timely closure at the end of 2022
- 2) To request that the fund allocates only up to a further £2,000 to new applicants in respect of emergency vouchers for refugees in Alton and the surrounding area. The remaining monies set aside for general hardship applications.

69 **To receive a report from the County/District Council**

County Councillor Andrew Joy gave a verbal report raising the matter of a pan-Hampshire type deal under consideration. Level 1 to Level 3 combined authority. The initial consultation proposal talks about an elected Leader or Mayor as a first amongst equals concept but with Secretary of State changes is on hold until later this year.

Councillor Burns requested that Councillor Joy let Members know if there is any thing further we need to be doing to get a positive outcome for the 20mph consultation.

Councillor Burns also enquired as to whether it was known why Hampshire only has half the money allocated from central government for cycling infrastructure compared to Surrey.

Councillor Joy replied to say the “we are in a state of limbo and meaningful answers and resolution is lacking but yes these questions are being asked”.

Finally, Councillor Burns asked what happens when vehicles are left when work needs to be done. There were three cars at the Butts which have been left in the way of resurfacing. Councillor Joy responded that HCC do have the authority to move vehicles but they also have the option to leave them and come back to undertake the work at a later date. He said he would go back and ask some serious questions about this. For utility street works, contractors are automatically fined, so why not residents who obstruct.

Councillor Hill gave the District Councillor report. He noted that the district councillor rota is not working very well; Councillor Dolan has not been able to attend the last two meetings and Cllr Langley has taken herself off the rota.

In summary:

- 1) Station Forecourt needed £440,000 which Cllr Millard gave executive permission for CIL and he was able to confirm that work was now going ahead starting on 8th August.
- 2) Alton has been awarded £1.22 million out of £2m in CIL to be confirmed tomorrow; over 50% of the allocation
- 3) EHDC will be moving to new premises imminently, leaving Penns Place for a venue already owned by the Council in the middle of Petersfield This will result in a 74% reduction on carbon footprint for the council which will use the new building as a hub as well as having satellite offices for public access around the district. Full council meetings will be on a roving basis between suitably sized venues.

4) In relation to the Local Plan EHDC have sent a letter to the Secretary of State over the difficult issue of housing numbers within and outside of, the South Downs National Park. In addition, two supplementary planning documents are being prepared one on higher standards in development in respect of energy use and the second to set the standards for development outside of the settlement boundary.

70 **Committee and Outside Body Vacancies**

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

RESOLVED to approve:

The appointment of Councillor Matthew Bayliss to Open Spaces and stepping down from Planning and Transport Committee

The matter of an appointment as the Council representative to the Friends of King's Pond was held over to the next meeting. Councillor Lewis Jones said he would be prepared to attend Friends liaison meetings but was unable to commit to the weekend working party sessions. Councillor Burns noted that position of liaison representative does not require participation at the hands-on working party, which could be equally undertaken by local residents.

71 **To receive the Minutes from the following Committees:**

Members received the Minutes of the following meetings which were noted.

Open Spaces – 30th June

Planning & Transport – 8th May, 15th June, 13th July

Policy and Resources – 20th July

NOTED

The meeting finished at 8.50pm.