



MINUTES OF THE KING'S POND TASK & FINISH GROUP

Monday 15th December 2025

Present: Councillor Don Hammond - Chair (DH)
Councillor John Quincey (JQ)
Tom Horwood – Town Clerk (TH)
Hayley Carter - Deputy Town Clerk (HC)
Natalie Beckell (NB) – Alton Town Council
Cathy Ayres – Resident representative (CA)
Paul Ebbutt – Resident representative (PE)
Angie Owens - Resident representative (AO)
Eric Phillips – Residents representative (EP)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Tim Pinchen - Resident representative (TP)

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

DH proposed that the amended minutes of the 20th November 2025 meeting were accepted as a true record of the meeting. This was seconded by CA and everyone voted in favour.

3. Additional Item

JQ said the Terms of Reference for the Task & Finish Group do not reflect the scope of works sufficiently well. He said he has no objection to Councillor Hammond being the chair but it has not been ratified by Full Council. He also noted that, while the council had appointed him as a member of the group, it was before he became a councillor.

He added that there was insufficient definition of the project in the Terms of Reference, saying there needs to be more in there about the silt traps and dealing with pollution at the pond.

He went on to say that the tender document does not refer to dealing with pollution.

DH said the terms of reference are quite broad because they could not be sure what would come out of the investigations or what would come out of Stage One. He added that it has never been implied that there would be a pure chalk stream. The Council has only ever said a continuation of the river – the best possible river

we can achieve and the best possible pond we can achieve. No option is a perfect option – there is always going to be some silting and some pollution. TH said that what is set out in the Terms of Reference is that the focus of the T&FG is Stage One. It is the ITT that we need to spend time on, because it needs to capture everything you want to then take to public consultation and the Council.

JQ then asked why are we not dealing with the pollution.

DH replied because dealing with the pollution upstream is outside the scope of the project and outside the control of the council. It is not possible for ATC to control the water coming into the pond from elsewhere.

He added that the condition of the river was probably at its best in the 1950s, when industrial use of the river had ceased, the population of the town was low and there was much less traffic

He emphasised that the pollution and silt problems would be the same for both options, so they do not need to be defined at this stage.

CA asked whether there is a definitive report showing where the silt is coming from.

DH said that TP has done a lot of work on it and they believe there are around 8 points where water comes into the river / pond. That has been shown already at the Community and Stakeholder Group meetings.

The problem is the same whether you go for Option B or Option C – it cannot be dealt with at this time. We can only deal with the property that ATC owns. Once we have done that, we can start to work with the relevant agencies to deal with these things.

Swales and balancing ponds, as described by Dr June Chatfield, are included in both initial designs – options 4a and 3c.

DH reminded the group that the previous Town Clerk did investigate the ownership of the weir and chamber but both the Environment Agency and Waterside Court denied ownership. It has only come to light through subsequent investigations.

JQ reiterated that we should put more in the tender. He said that CALA had included 4 silt traps on the former brewery site and we do not yet know what impact they will have. He added that we should add silt traps at the other entry points to the pond into the ITT.

DH said that the pollution will be the same for either option, so is not critical to the decision to be taken. It is important for the future health of the pond and the river, but not for deciding between the pond and the pond/river options.

ACTION: Circulate the ITT and Terms of Reference to all members of the T&FG for comment and to take the Terms of Reference and committee membership to a future Full Council meeting.

4. **Feedback from Full Council on 10th December**

Resolution was to continue with options B and C – dredging of the pond and retaining a pond but with a river alongside it. In addition to this it was resolved to start a sinking fund, which was included in the budget.

DH said that TH had prepared a paper which reopened the debate on which options we should go for. Some people did not like the reintroduction of options. He said that he had proposed to continue with option B (dredge and improve, formerly 2a) and the reintroduced option C (pond and river, the former 3c replacing 4a) and that is what was carried.

The Stage One Tender had already been discussed. DH raised public consultation and the possibility of an artist's impression of option C so we can then ask the public if they want us to continue investigating it as part of the Stage One work prior to the Council taking a decision between the two options, to supplement option B which is what visitors already experience.

AO asked whether that would include the ecology as that is really important to people.

JQ asked whether any of the ecology reports are time limited. DH responded that they are not time limited, provided that we get on with the project.

PE asked whether there is any point going out to consultation without the costs.

DH said that a year ago when we had the two options from the Water Environment report we went out and did presentations and public engagement. He asked if it is time to redo that, with better drawings, asking whether people still want them to investigate both options and making sure they are aware that this time it will cost money to do. He said people know what the pond looks like, but they do not know what a pond and river option would look like.

CA said they would definitely benefit from better pictures.

PE said these need to include more detail of the biodiversity / ecological benefits.

DH said there can be more discussions on the ecology, and indeed there should be open discussions on that. He said it would give a better idea to the public of what it is and how much getting to the end of Stage One would cost.

AO said it is important the public are shown a better picture of the pond and river option.

DH said if we can do more public engagement similar to what we did a year ago we can pull more ecology into that. He added we need to get a better idea on what public sentiment is before the Council have to make another decision on spending. The presentations / engagement sessions should be spread around both geographically and on different days / times so that people are not excluded.

This way, when it goes to Council to make a decision on the results of the ITT, we would have more up-to-date information on how the public feel.

Once the work has been done following the ITT, you would then have a proper public consultation with costs.

TH noted that, if the parish meeting decides to run a parish poll, the council will be constrained on what it can communicate beforehand as it must not try to influence how people may vote and should try to avoid the appearance of doing so.

5. Review of Actions

- Programme – no change at present
- EA – no change
- Ecology – all reports are now on the website
- Tree Works – Council agreed to go ahead
- Waterside Court & The Dam – Feedback from WC was given at the Full Council meeting on 10th December.
- Thames Water – awaiting further responses
- Lasham Drain – nothing further to report
- HCC Highways – TH has put in an FOI request

6. Collation & Storage of Information

NB said everyone should have had an invitation to Drop Box. There is no need to pay for an account. She said she would resend the invitation.

7. Date of next meeting

Monday 19th January 2026: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Market Square 11:00am – 12:30pm

Monday 9th February: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Market Square 11:00am – 12:30pm