

WALLINGFORD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES

of the

Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces Committee Meeting held in the Town Hall,
Wallingford on
Monday 15th April 2019

PRESENT

Councillors Davidson, Kidley and McGregor, Wilder
The Chairman, Councillor Lester
The Mayor, Councillor Upcraft

The Town Clerk, Mrs Paula Lopez
Mr Bryan Gilbey, The Park's Foreman
Mrs Tracey Collins, Officer and Minute Taker

687. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Baroni and Hughes.

688. ADMISSION OF THE PUBLIC

There were no admissions of the public.

689. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

A Councillor with voting rights who has a disclosable pecuniary interest or another interest as set out in our Council's Standing Orders code of Conduct (Item 13) in a matter being considered at a meeting is subject to statutory limitations or restrictions under code of conduct and his right to participate and vote on the matter (guidelines are available at the meeting and all Councillors have received a copy prior to the meeting).

There were no declarations of interest.

690. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - NOTIFIED AND IMPROMPTU (15 MINUTES IN TOTAL)

Ms D. Blackwell was invited to speak to Council. Ms Blackwell reported that when the markets are in town they use the benches to balance their trestle tables which means they

can't be sat on. Ms Blackwell understood that some of the benches had been screwed down which means they can't be moved so the traders have to use the benches but feels that they should respect the members of public who need to use the benches to sit on. A lot of people visit the town to shop and use the buses and would like to sit on the benches. The lack of benches is not very good for Wallingford and on market days there is nowhere for the public to sit. Councillor Lester confirmed that this was an agenda item 11a and would be discussed during the meeting.

Councillor Maureen Norton understood that agenda item 10e is to discuss allowing dogs into the Castle Gardens. Councillor Norton would like to strongly object to any dogs being allowed in the gardens. There are responsible dog owners that pick up after their dog but there are plenty of irresponsible owners who won't. It is the only place in town where parents can take children and let them roll down the hill and crawl on the grass without fear of getting dog mess all over themselves. If you follow the Facebook page Wallingford Piper you will see that people grumble continuously about the Kinecroft and the Bull Croft because it is full of dog mess. I quote one parent "my child has only just learnt to walk, stepped in dog mess then fell over and subsequently got it all over the pushchair" this is a disgusting mess to clear up. Councillor Norton asked that the Castle Gardens be kept free of dogs thereby keeping the space clean for the community.

691. PARKS, GARDENS, ALLOTMENTS AND OPEN SPACES MINUTES

To sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces Meeting held on the 21st January 2019, as set out on pages 205-210.

**Proposed by Councillor Kidley, Seconded by the Mayor, Councillor Upcraft and
RESOLVED: THAT the Minutes of the of the Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces Meeting held on the 21st January 2019, as set out on pages 205-210 of the Minute Book, copies circulated to Councillors, be signed as a correct record.**

692. ALLOTMENTS

a) Waiting List and Annual Fees – The Allotment Officer reported that there were currently just three people on the waiting list. The increase in fees had been accepted by all but one, a letter had just been received from one plot holder after the agenda had been raised. The letter would be heard at the next Full Council meeting on 20th May 2019.

b) Site E – An e-mail has been received from SODC with regard to the provision of allotments, this will need to be discussed at a later date.

693. PARKS STAFF

a) Update from the Parks Foreman - Mr Pearson has returned from long term sick leave everything seems to be ok, Mr Marsden has been re-employed as a part-time summer

gardener and an interview will take place tomorrow (16th April 2019) for a potential second part-time summer gardener. Mr Gilbey confirmed he had enough uniform for the new staff.

694. KINECROFT

a. Charges revisited – Minute 487b (iii)/01/2019 update on charges by other local towns. A brief update was given on what the other local towns charge their fairs, these range from the minimal £240 per trading day to £28,000 because of outside factors, loss of trading, security traffic diversions etc, so the range is large depending on how the fair trades and the impact on the town.

Town Clerk asked if the charges should be revisited ready for the next meeting. Councillors Davidson and Upcraft agreed this should be the case. Mrs Collins will access the information and report at the next meeting.

To note forthcoming events on Kinecroft –

Perry Hatwell's Fair, 29th April to 6th May
Wallingford Vehicle Rally, 12th May
Carnival, 15th June

Councillor Kidley informed Councillors that the Wallingford and Cholsey Railway had liaised with RAF Benson and arranged a couple of flypasts over the railway and Kinecroft, the dates are as follows.

5th May – Spitfire
6th May – Dakota
12th May – Lancaster

695. BULLCROFT

a. New Bin Required – One of the litter bins has been damaged and a new one is required. The Parks Foreman also reported that a bin was required at the Moorings as this had been removed some time ago.

Proposed by Councillor Wilder, Seconded by Councillor Davidson and RESOLVED THAT: a new bin should be bought for the Bull Croft to replace the broken one and if there is money in the budget, there should also be a replacement at the moorings.

b. Grass Cutting – Crowmarsh Football Club e-mailed the office to say thank you to the parks staff for cutting the grass this season, they said “the Bull Croft surface looks smashing”.

696. CASTLE GARDENS

a. Castle Mound - The Town Clerk reported that a structural engineers report from Historic England had been received for the Castle Mound, it had been forwarded to the working party for discussion. Essentially a landscape architect should be instructed to take a

look and plot out the mound, The Town Clerk has given the working party three different contractors for them to obtain quotes. Essentially the path up to the mound has been worn by the public and needs to be changed to how it was in the past. Vegetation on the sides, not the trees at the top should be stripped off as it was never there in the past, it was just a grassy mound, the working party are dealing with this. Councillor Upcraft suggested waiting for the working party to come up with their recommendations.

- b. Closing Times -**
- 1st April to 31st May - 8.30am - 6pm
 - 1st June to 30th September - 8.30am – 7pm
 - 1st October to 31st March - 8.30am – 3pm

The Parks Foreman felt that the closing time is 30 minutes too late for the people locking up, they have to deal with any trouble which often occurs around 6.30pm onwards and this is also when the vandalism occurs. Councillor Upcraft asked if there was much public use from 6pm – 7pm, Councillor Lester reported that there was because of people finishing work and it's a nice to go and sit and meet friends. The Parks Foreman reported that it was generally children at that time of day, the adults have normally gone to get something to eat and the kids come out for that last hour. This is the feedback from the parks staff, who are happy to continue till 7pm, but maybe if we monitor it for this year to see how it goes. Councillor McGregor agreed it should be monitored especially if there are a number of members of the public using it inappropriately. Councillor Kidley asked how the members of the public were removed from the grounds. The Parks Foreman explained that the groups are approached to explain that the gardens are going to be locked up. If there are big groups it can be intimidating. Councillor Kidley asked if it needed a second person to support the parks staff to lock up. The Parks Foreman explained that if they are in larger groups they can get rowdy but nobody has been attacked or verbally abused so it's not an issue at the moment but something to think about for the future. The Parks Foreman explained that the notice now states that last entry into the gardens is 20 minutes before closing which gives enough time to tell everyone it is closing at 7pm. There have been times where the staff have not finished till 7.30pm. Councillor Davidson expressed her concerns that they had to deal with the damage and vandalism that is caused during these times but felt they did not have enough information at this at stage to be able to move things forward so it's a good idea to monitor the usage. Councillor Lester agreed for the parks staff to monitor for this summer and keep the closing time to 7pm.

- c. New Signs -** Quotes have been received for some new signs for the Castle Gardens from Haines Signs who made the signs at the moorings which have received very positive feedback as they are bright and clear. The cost of the signs range from £30 for the large signs to £8 for the smaller ones, depending on the content and how many are required. The office to work with the Parks Foreman to decide on the best wording along, correct and up to date information and the best position for the new signs. Councillors proposed deferring this until after item 696(e).

d. Pond - Minutes 167/07/2016 & 29/9/2016 and 483a/1/2019 – Councillor Lester asked the Parks Foreman to give an update on the pond, photos of the pond area were distributed and the Parks Foreman explained that after initial drawings and sizes it was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

e. Request to allow dogs into the Castle Gardens - Councillor Lester explained that all Councillors had received a copy of the e-mail from Councillor Whelen requesting uniformity of all the open spaces and to allow dogs into the grounds. Councillor Lester started the conversation as she felt very strongly that dogs should not be allowed into the Castle Gardens and agreed with everything that Councillor Norton has already said. It is a garden it isn't a park and believed the Council should aim to preserve it as such. Councillor McGregor agreed that as a responsible dog owner himself he is well aware that not everyone is as conscientious as himself, and feels that even if we trialled this it would be opened up to abuse. Councillor Upcraft stated that he was opposed to this and not just because of irresponsible dog owners and the mess but some people just do not like dogs including his daughter who was terrified in the park when she was around 3, a small dog off the lead came barking up to her which she really did not like. There are at least two other large spaces that can be used by dog owners. Councillor Kidley, as a dog owner felt there should be some places that should be without dogs, the Castle Gardens is a quiet clean place and if we allow dogs that could change very quickly. Councillor McGregor noted that the letter that was received really stated that Councillor Lester pointed out that the e-mail also suggested that cycles be allowed into the gardens but she felt this was totally unnecessary. The current signs say no dogs and no cycles and the restrictions should be kept. If anyone is flouting the rules they should be asked to leave the way they came in.

Proposed by Councillor Davidson, Seconded by Councillor Upcraft and RESOLVED THAT: The Castle Gardens should remain as a dog and cycle free area.

f. Flower Displays – The Parks Foreman is looking to order the new bedding plants for next year's spring bedding and would like to know what colour scheme to use. Councillor Upcraft reported that interestingly it was the 350th year of the founding of Wallingford Connecticut and suggested that they are asked what colours they would like. All Councillors agreed this was a good idea, Councillor Upcraft will make contact.

To note forthcoming events in Castle Gardens –

Band concerts with refreshments on the 2nd and 23rd June, 14th July and 11th August 2019.

697. OPEN SPACES

a. Market Place – Minute 87d/01/2019 The Town Clerk confirmed that Wallingford Town Council definitely own the sub soil of the Market Place, however since talking with SODC with regard to asking a parking attendant to monitor the illegal parking it turns out that the

Market Place has been adopted by Oxfordshire County Council. Unfortunately, there is no supporting paperwork, as to the reason and no date when it all happened, all there is, is a map and OCC have agreed that they have adopted it. This has only just been discovered so quite what this means is still unsure. Councillor Upcraft explained he had been approached by Councillor Hornsby who suggested maybe we could find a special constable who would like to volunteer some of his or her time to train and be our local parking enforcement, the Town Council would sponsor this person but it could be a way forward.

With regard to Ms Blackwell's concerns (Minute 690 above), Councillor Lester spoke to the organiser for the Independent Market whom promised that she would speak with the rug man who does use a few benches for his goods and, Councillor Lester also spoke with the spokesperson for the Charter Market who has promised to put the benches back where they find them. Councillor Lester asked there could be some signs saying no parking. The Town Clerk explained that if the Market Place has been adopted it's not for the Town Council to put up signs and as it is in a conservation area this may not be allowed.

b. Christmas Decorations – Minute 487e/01/2109 - Councillor Lester spoke with Councillor Hornsby but unfortunately there are no funds available for new lighting. Councillor Lester asked the Town Clerk about using the arts grant but the Town Clerk explained that the arts grant could not be used for lights specifically but would need to be incorporated in some form of art. Item deferred to a later date.

c. Summer Watering – Councillor Dolton expressed his concerns with regard to watering the hanging baskets on Wallingford Bridge when the children are going to school and suggested using a pole for watering instead. The parks staff explained that they have the bowser on the path so that they don't block the bridge. There would be a health and safety risk in using hosepipes as these could potentially be a trip hazard. The Parks Foreman explained that they had made the process much safer over the years. One man is harnessed in to the cage on the back of the bowser and the driver does not move unless the guy on top says he's ready to go. The tractor is taken out of gear, hand break on and there is no movement. The process has been made much easier by using a funnel system. The staff start an hour earlier during the summer months so starting at 7am to get the watering done and normally finish about 8.30am. Councillor McGregor having spoken with Councillor Dolton prior to the meeting explained that there were two issues of concern, health and safety for the parks staff in being on the top of the tractor, driving along, up and down the pavements etc along with health and safety for members of the public whilst going to school, work, mums with pushchairs etc. Is there any other way of distributing the water, any other way at all?

The Parks Foreman explained that they had come up with a number of ways over the years to make things safer for everyone. When the baskets on the bridge are being watered and children or mums with pushchairs are in the area, the staff stop watering leave an area for them to walk past and come off the path if possible. The Parks Foreman doesn't believe there have been any complaints, in fact they are complimented on stopping and waiting or

moving. The Parks Foreman explained that the baskets are very different baskets to other towns Henley have to water their moss baskets every day including Saturday and Sunday whereas the baskets this Council use only need watering 3 times a week. The staff go into town early as it's the quietest time of day, the Market Place first then the bridge because of the bus timetable and there is less water on the tractor which causes less stress, wear and tear on the tractor itself. The staff manage the watering based on what's happening on that day they don't stick to a route rigidly. Whilst watering, the staff also deadhead because they are up high enough to do this job which means you get more flowers that's why some towns don't have such good flower displays. The risk has been reduced due to the nature of the baskets the watering only has to be done 3 days a week. If the staff watered any other way it would need to be done every day. The Town Clerk suggested talking with Councillor Dolton and going through things properly.

The Parks Foreman explained, going back to signs in the Castle Gardens 696(c), there should be some new signs which would help members of the public see clearly when the Gardens Close.

Proposed by Councillor Davidson, Seconded by Councillor Upcraft and RESOLVED THAT: The Castle Gardens should have new signs which incorporate opening, closing signs and no dogs allowed.

The Parks Foreman confirmed that had been no problems at the Moorings.

698. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Kinecroft Fair Charges Minute 487b) (ii)/01/2019, 694(a)/04/2019

Site E, Allotments

Parks staff to Monitor usage of Castle Gardens Minute 696(b)15/4/19 to be discussed 20th January 2020

Castle Gardens Pond, Minutes 167(a)/07/2016, 322(d)/9/2016, 483(a)/1/2019, 696(d)/4/2019

Flowers, Minute 696(f)/4/2019, Councillor Upcraft to update on colour scheme

2115 Hours – Meeting Closed.