



Wallingford Town Council

MINUTES
of a meeting of the
PARKS, GARDENS, ALLOTMENTS &
OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE
held on Monday, 6 November 2023 at 7.00 pm
in Wallingford Town Hall

Present

Members: Cllr Mike Acreman
Cllr Mahmood Ebrahimjee
Cllr Steve Holder (Chairman)
Cllr Katharine Keats-Rohan

Officers: Luke Whitcomb, Meetings Officer
Scott Wells, Parks and Estates Manager
Duncan Kent, Parks and Estates contractor

Others: 7 member of the public
0 members of the press

371/23 **MEETING PROTOCOL**

The Chairman outlined the protocol that would be following in the conduct of the meeting.

372/23 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Hendrie and Lester.

It was proposed by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and seconded by Councillor Ebrahimjee, and

RESOLVED that the apologies and reasons for absence be accepted

373/23 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

374/23

MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and seconded by Councillor Ebrahimjee, and

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces Committee held on 4 September 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

375/23

ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Committee reviewed progress on 'open' actions agreed at previous meetings.

376/23

VARIATION OF AGENDA ORDER

It was proposed by Councillor Holder, and seconded by Councillor Acreman, and

RESOLVED that the item on Kinecroft (item 19) be brought forward and considered after the item on Events (item 12) in view of the public present

377/23

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A member of the public spoke in favour of the Town Council creating a community allotment to complement the community vegetable garden next to the Library in the High Street. The latter was part of the Incredible Edible movement.

The Chairman undertook to look into this, particularly as it had been discussed before.

Action:

Chairman to investigate the idea of a community allotment

378/23

SEASONAL REPORT

The Committee received a seasonal report from the Parks and Estates Manager that covered the months of September and October 2023. He drew attention to three matters: the sensory garden that was being created by his team in New Road, electric vehicles, including the potential for these to be included in the budget for 2024-2025 Municipal Year and the potential of external funding for this, and thirdly, the order that had been placed for a wood chipper.

379/23 **SIX-MONTH WALK AROUND**

The Chairman reported that the next walk around would be on 13 December 2023.

Action:

Any councillors wanting to be involved should reach out to Councillor Holder

380/23 **HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDIT**

The Chairman explained that this would be a substantive item on the agenda for the Committee's next meeting in February 2024, including the full report and a clear timeline of what needed to be done and when.

Action:

Office to pull a report of actions and who is doing what by when

381/23 **FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY**

The Chairman explained that the Parks and Estates Team had recently held an event to map out their five-year plan. A major feature of this was the identification of clear priorities for each year to avoid the team being driven by events or becoming overly reactive.

Action:

Parks and Estates strategy to be presented at the next meeting

382/23 **ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

There were still concerns with behaviour at the Castle site and also damaged being caused to the Saxon ramparts by bikes.

Historic England were presently reviewing and reshaping their Heritage Crime initiative, for which Wallingford had volunteered to be a pilot. A major feature of this was public engagement including with schools to develop awareness and understanding.

383/23 **EVENTS ON PUBLIC SPACES**

The Committee NOTED that the following public events would be taking place on Council-owned outdoor property from the date of the meeting to the end of the 2023 calendar year

- 12 November, Remembrance Sunday, Market Place (plus Remembrance Display in Town Hall on 10-12 November)
- 18 November, Wild about Wallingford open-planning for the use of the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Connected Communities grant
- 3 December, Santa Dash, Bull Croft and Kinecroft
- 3 December, Christmas trading fayre, Town Centre
- 13 December, Christmas Carols, Market Place

384/23

KINECROFT

At the request of the Chairman, a representative of the local 1155 charity spoke about the annual fireworks displays that had been held on the evening of Saturday, 4 November 2023, including his conversation with the Parks and Estates Manager following the event to ensure that the ground was fully restored in keeping with the agreement. The park normally recovered by spring-time.

The Chairman referenced the positive and negative comments that had been made on social media and which were voiced annually by residents, the negative primarily referring to parking abuses. The Town Council was obliged to consider both sides.

The Committee thanked the 1155 charity for their organisation of such a spectacular and popular event.

Action:

Cllr Holder to meet with 1155 to action parking and environmental issues and come back to the next meeting with a plan for future events

385/23

BRITAIN IN BLOOM

The Committee reviewed the judges' report following the ceremony on 27 September 2023 where Wallingford had received an overall Silver award and won the regional community involvement award. In future, there was the opportunity to submit several entries.

Action:

Working Group to meet on 15 November 2023 and report back to the next meeting on next year's entry

386/23

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The Committee considered the following action relating to the climate emergency:

(a) Community gardens and orchards

Wild about Wallingford and the Town Council were still waiting to hear from Berkeley Homes on the portion of land that was being allocated as part of Winterbrook Meadows. It was believed that the developers remained positive about the proposal.

(b) Equipment for 'low mow' areas

The Parks and Estates Team were continuing to hire this equipment and this arrangement would continue until at least the development of an electric vehicle strategy. Henley Town Council also hired their equipment.

(c) Electric vehicles

This had been discussed earlier under Minute 378/23 and also 386/23(b).

387/23

ARBORICULTURE

The Committee considered a recent survey of some of the trees on the Kinecroft, including the five horse chestnut trees at the north end, one of which had died, and the much-discussed horse chestnut tree by the Coach and Horses Pub.

The Chairman reported that the final decision on the horse chestnut tree by the Coach and Horses Pub had been deferred by one month – due to the need to understand the current position of Fullers Brewery – and would be taken by the Full Council at their meeting on 20 November 2023. The tree had been invigorated to some extent by the action taken earlier in the year but this was causing damage to the pub building. Equally, if the tree was removed, other damage would be caused to the building. There was therefore no easy solution. A previous survey had confirmed that this tree was moribund and would die within the next five to ten years.

The Chairman reported on expressions of interest by members of the community to serve on the Council's new Trees Working Group. He would be responding to offers of voluntary support later in the week.

388/23

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

The Committee considered a paper proposing a new approach to vegetation management on the Council Motte that could be extended in time to other

Wallingford Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The proposal comprised of a partnership with the Earth Trust who already managed the Castle Meadows site for the District Council and would involve the introduction of grazing by goats who were suited to the steep inclines of the Motte.

It was proposed by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and seconded by Councillor Ebrahimjee, and

RECOMMENDED that the new vegetation management approach be adopted for Castle Motte, involving a partnership with the Earth Trust, at an initial cost of £11k extending to a further £8k if the Council continues into a Phase 1 habitat survey; this could ultimately be offset from funding from the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

389/23

RED KITES

The Chairman reported that the Chilterns Conservation Board (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) had recently held a strategic discussion on red kites with stakeholder bodies, in the light of the growing number of nuisance issues being reported by the public. The output and recommended advice was broadly in line with what the Town Council were already doing.

This no longer needed to appear on the Committee's agenda going forwards.

390/23

SPECIES SURVEYS

The Committee considered three species surveys relating to the Bull Croft, the Castle Gardens and the new Winterbrook Meadows. These fed into a larger Thames Valley database.

391/23

BULL CROFT

The Committee received an update on the resurfacing of the tennis courts by the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA). A new contractor had been appointed who could work within the restricted access. However, the total project cost was now £51,502.63, creating a shortfall of £5,752.63 against the maximum LTA funding of £45,750. The LTA were asking the Town Council to cover the shortfall.

It was proposed by Councillor Holder, and seconded by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and

RECOMMENDED that the shortfall in funding of £5,752.63 be met from General Reserves during the 2023-24 Municipal Year unless alternative funding can be found

The Committee also considered proposals for the archaeological surveys that were required to progress the planning applications.

It was proposed by Councillor Holder, and seconded by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and

RESOLVED that the archaeological survey proposal be forwarded to Historic England for their approval

392/23

CASTLE GARDENS

The Committee considered a proposal for re-opening of the Motte to the public.

Consideration of the water feature and the Castle Lane doorway would be deferred to the next meeting because Councillor Hendrie could not be present.

It was generally considered that the moment for a special opening would be best delayed until better weather in spring 2024. The date for a meeting to discuss improved security needed to be agreed

Scheduled monument consent was still awaiting for the information boards but had been given for the planting of the Berberis.

It was proposed by Councillor Holder, and seconded by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and

RECOMMENDED that the Council adopt the proposal for re-opening the Castle Motte, the costs to be met from the budget for the 2024-25 Municipal Year.

Action:

Parks and Estates Team to plant the Berberis

Security meeting to be scheduled between Cllrs Holder and Keats-Rohan, and improved security to be funded from the Wolfson grant.

Opening costs of the Motte to be included in the budget meeting.

393/23

ALLOTMENTS

The Chairman reported on the annual meeting of allotment holders at this year's WAGS Show and at the allotments. The installation of new fencing had recently approved by the Full Council. The Highcroft allotments were close to

being handed over, but the guarantee and ownership of the bridge over the culvert needed to be finalised by solicitors first. A recent review of the existing Fir Tree allotments had revealed that around 15% did not appear to be actively managed. The waiting list was currently 37.

It was proposed by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and seconded by Councillor Acreman, and

RECOMMENDED that half-plots rather than full plots be allocated from now onwards, unless a convincing case could be made for a full plot.

Action:

The request for a curved mirror across the road to improve safety for car owners to be forwarded to the budget meeting of the Full Council

394/23

RIVERSIDE

Slipways for improved accessible mooring needed to be constructed by the District Council.

There was no update available on moorings income.

The District Council needed to advise on the type of buoyancy aids to be used as the current ones were unsuitable.

Action:

The Office to set up a meeting with SODC to understand the correct buoyancy aids and ensure these are ordered and put in place

395/23

REST GARDEN

Additional quotations needed to be sought for the King Charles III coronation commemorative art installation, but this required the development of a design brief.

Action:

Cllrs Acreman and Holder and the Parks and Estates Manager to meet to develop the design brief

396/23 ST JOHN'S GREEN

Bulb-planting was planned for St John's Green, and the bench could be replaced.

Action:

Cllr Holder to meet with Wild about Wallingford to confirm plans

397/23 HARWELL ESTATE 'HOT DOG'

Wild about Wallingford ready to go ahead with these and were planning to include crocuses, aconites and snowdrops. The hedge would be trimmed but it still needed to serve as a buffer against pollution and noise.

398/23 NEW ROAD GREEN SPACE

This had already been discussed as part of the Seasonal Report, Minute 378/23.

399/23 ADDITIONAL GREEN SPACES IN THE HIGHCROFT AND WINTERBROOK MEADOWS HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

As reported earlier, the Highcroft allotments were ready to be handed over, but a management agency was responsible for the other green spaces on the site.

A management agency was yet to be set up for Winterbrook Meadows, so there was still an opportunity for the Town Council to consider adopting some of these green spaces.

400/23 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The following items were identified for future meetings:

- St Mary-le-More, St Leonard's and All Hallows – verge-cutting
- Castle Gardens – water feature, doorway in Castle Lane (allocated to Cllr Hendrie)
- Parks and Estates Team Five-Year Strategy
- 1155 events – action plan for parking and environmental issues

401/23

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and seconded by Councillor Acreman, and

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted

The meeting ended at 9.09 pm

Minutes of the meeting of the
Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces Committee
held on
6 November 2023,
signed as a correct record

Chairman

2023-11-06 PKS minutes PUBLIC