



Wallingford Town Council

MINUTES
of a meeting of the
PARKS, GARDENS, ALLOTMENTS &
OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE
held on Monday, 5 February 2023 at 7.00 pm
in Wallingford Town Hall

Present

- Members:** Cllr Mike Acreman
Cllr Mahmood Ebrahimjee
Cllr Sue Hendrie
Cllr Steve Holder (Chairman)
Cllr Katharine Keats-Rohan
Cllr Ros Lester (Vice-Chairman)
- Officers:** Luke Whitcomb, Meetings Officer
Scott Wells, Parks and Estates Manager
- Others:** 9 member of the public
0 members of the press

565/23 MEETING PROTOCOL

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

566/23 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

567/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

568/23

MINUTES

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces Committee held on 6 November 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

569/23

ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

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

570/23

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Several members of the public contributed to the discussions on the items minuted at 572/23, 573/23, 574/23, 575/23, 576/23, 578/23 and 590/23.

571/23

VARIATION OF AGENDA ORDER

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

RESOLVED that the following matters be brought forward in the agenda due to public interest:

- Bulb planting (Item 10)
- Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) community growing network (Item 11)
- Arboriculture (Item 15)
- Location of the three replacement trees, Kinecroft (Item 18(b))
- Wallingford Garden and Allotment Society (Item 21(b))

572/23

BULB PLANTING

A representative of Wild about Wallingford reported that around 300 bulbs had recently been planted. This has been made possible through funding from the Town Council. A list of locations was available. Although not itemised specifically in the budget for 2024-25 Municipal Year, Wild about Wallingford could apply for a further grant.

The Chairman thanked the representative and the volunteers who had undertaken this work.

573/23

ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY (RHS) COMMUNITY GROWING NETWORK

The representative of Wild about Wallingford reported on how the recent RHS grant – made possible by the Town Council's entry into Britain in Bloom – was

being spent. Some community engagement events had been held and also research undertaken. It was hoped that the membership of the Wallingford Allotment and Garden Society (WAGS) might be challenged to allow community groups to join, as well as members. WAGS seemed the natural vehicle to progress the growing network intended by the grant.

574/23

ARBORICULTURE

The Chairman reported on the initial work of the new Trees Working Group which had met three times. The current focus was on the types of trees that were suitable for specific areas and which could endure the effects of climate change. The Working Group was still taking the lead from the Town Council's subject matter experts, as required by the Council.

Members of the public who were members of the Working Group contributed to the discussion by invitation of and at the discretion of the Chairman.

It was proposed by Councillor Lester, and seconded by Councillor Ebrahimjee, and

RESOLVED that support be given to the general direction that the Working Group was taking and that approval be given for uncut areas underneath the trees on the Kinecroft to preserve moisture as trial, with mulching retained as an option in the future

Action:

The uncut areas underneath trees on the Kinecroft to be added to the schedule of works for 'low mow areas'

575/23

LOCATION OF THREE REPLACEMENT TREES ON THE KINECROFT

The Chairman reported on the proposed locations for three replacement trees on the Kinecroft and the limitations caused by this outdoor space being a Scheduled Monument. He also fed back on the comments of the regulatory body Historic England.

Members of the public who were members of the Working Group contributed to the discussion by the invitation and at the discretion of the Chairman, as well as a representative of Bunkfest. The directors of Bunkfest wishes to help with the planting of new trees, ideally on the Kinecroft, to offset the diesel generators used at the festival. The Chairman explained that due to limited planting windows, it would not be possible to plant a tree in time for the 2024 event. However some form of communication could be made this year about the intent of the directors.

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

RESOLVED that Historic England's decision on Location 1 be accepted, Location 3(b) be approved and that Historic England's advice on Location 2 be accepted with the existing tree being stump-ground rather than used for habitat and that a replacement tree be planted in the hollow

576/23

WALLINGFORD GARDEN AND ALLOTMENT SOCIETY (WAGS)

A representative of Wallingford Garden and Allotment Society gave a short history of this RHS-affiliated group which had existed for fifty years. Their activities included a store, a show, trips and a newsletter. However they were now struggling with numbers and a number of key people had left.

The Committee discussed the practice of other communities where the garden show was part of a wider fete.

The Chairman asked Members to send any ideas for the society's rejuvenation to the Chairman

Action:

Send ideas to the WAGS Chairman, Ms Sandra Halstead

577/23

VARIATION OF AGENDA ORDER

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

RESOLVED the following item be brought forward due the interest of the public present at the meeting

- Trees, planters and benches, Market Place (Item 23(a))

578/23

TREES, PLANTERS AND BENCHES, MARKET PLACE

The Committee briefly discussed the potential for small trees in planters to be introduced to the Market Place to add greenery to the space. Planters would enable a trial to be undertaken. This idea had been raised at the 2023 Annual Town Meeting and had received further public support since then. There would be issues with permanent planting due to subterranean utilities and space required for the Charter Market.

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

RESOLVED that this idea be referred to the Trees Working Group for further development before being brought back to the Committee at a future meeting

Action:

Include under 'Future Agenda Items'

579/23

SEASONAL REPORT

The Parks and Estates Manager gave his seasonal report which included three highlights: the purchase of a wood chipper, the development of a sensory garden in New Road (see also Minute 591/23 below) and the addition of a portable tablet computer to assist with team's work.

580/23

HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDIT

Consideration of detailed recommendations would be considered at the next meeting, but the Chairman reported that various actions were under way.

Action:

Schedule for the next meeting of the Committee

581/23

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGY

The Committee received and supported the five-year strategy that had been developed with the Parks and Estates Team. This had already started to be implemented.

582/23

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The Chairman reported that the Library had been put in touch with the Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) following their concerns reported at the last meeting and that instances of anti-social behaviour were taking place on the Castle ruins. The latter was discussed under the item minuted as 589/23(e).

583/23

HISTORIC ENGLAND'S HERITAGE CRIME INITIATIVE

Councillor Keats-Rohan reported that this initiative was now progressing, having stalled for several months. She highlighted the Heritage Watch app that allowed users to record and share information on heritage crime, including suspicious behaviour, in their home community.

584/23

DOG POO

The Committee considered growing concerns with dog waste in different parts of the town, including on the bridge.

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

RESOLVED that a doo poo campaign be developed and run, starting in the spring

Action:

Campaign to be developed by Committee Chairman and relevant Office staff members

585/23

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

(a) Winterbrook Meadows, Community Orchard, Open Green Spaces

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

RESOLVED that a report with recommendations of which spaces could and should be adopted by the Town Council, be taken to the Full Council

Action:

Schedule for Full Council

(b) Species surveys

The Committee NOTED that the results were now being recorded on the Thames Valley database.

(c) Low mow areas

The Parks and Estates Manager was asked to bring back to the Committee any issues with workload at a future meeting. The areas would be increased by the proposal to leave uncut areas underneath the trees on the Kincroft. See Minute 575/23 above.

(d) Electric vehicles

The hire or purchase of these was being considered as part of the five –year strategy (Minute 581/23). South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) might be issuing grants for electric in the 2024-25 Municipal Year,

(e) Net biodiversity gain workshop

The Committee NOTED that a workshop hosted by Berkeley Homes would be taking place on Wednesday, 21 February 2024.

Action:

Councillor Acreman to be invited

586/23

EVENTS ON PUBLIC SPACES

The Committee NOTED public events that would be taking place on the Kinecroft, Market Place and the Bull Croft during 2024, including a request from the Michaelmas Fair for an additional two days of set-up and breakdown.

The request by the Michaelmas Fair would be taken to the Full Council to gain a wider view as there were public sensitivities arising from the history of this event.

Action:

Michaelmas Fair request to go the Full Council on 19 February 2024

587/23

KINECROFT

(a) Coach and Horses soakaway

The Chairman reported that Fuller’s Brewery had found an alternative solution to the problem of flooding; this involved diverting water through the garden of the property.

(b) Letter sent to neighbouring residents

The Committee NOTED that a letter had been sent to residents neighbouring the Kinecroft discouraging the dumping of waste on the banks and ditches of the Scheduled Monument.

(c) Agatha Christie bench

The Committee supported some form of hard standing around the statue but there would be sensitivities about the materials on a Scheduled Monument. This though had not been budgeted and would have to find its relative place within the other list of priorities.

The Committee disliked the idea of planting behind the bench and wished the statue to appear as natural as possible in the landscape.

Action:

Schedule this for the June meeting of the Committee by which time the proposal could be further developed

588/23

BULL CROFT

(a) Tennis courts

The Chairman reported that licensed and operating agreements had now been signed, a solution had been found to the access issues and contracted work was scheduled. The Committee NOTED the content and form of the external communications that needed to be issued.

(b) Planning permission

The Chairman reported on the need for two Scheduled Monument Consents relating to activity and location respectively.

Twelve pits would be dug during March for the archaeological survey work required for planning permission.

(c) Bat hibernation survey

The Chairman reported that survey visits were now being made every month.

589/23

CASTLE GARDENS

(a) Net biodiversity gain approach

Following the filling-in of a dip in the garden of 8C Castle Street, at the request of the tenant and as part of the tenancy agreement, Councillor

Acreman had proposed that the Council adopted a net biodiversity gain approach.

(b) Water feature

Although Historic England had indicated that they were likely to refuse any further requests for the restoration of the Victorian water feature due to the site being a Scheduled Monument, the Committee maintained wholehearted support for the idea.

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

RESOLVED that unanimous support be given to the restoration of the Victorian water feature which had existed at the time the garden was gifted to the town by the Hedges family and out of respect for their generosity that enabled public access to the Scheduled Monument; the water feature would also contribute towards net biodiversity gain

(c) Public access to Castle Gardens from Castle Lane

The idea of reopening the access point to the Gardens from Castle Lane was not supported for logistical and security reasons.

(d) New communication and noticeboards

The Committee considered a proposal for a new low level notice board to communicate key messages including no dogs, tree planting and the status as a Scheduled Monument.

Budget existed for this work.

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

RESOLVED that the proposal for a new noticeboard be approved

(e) Security for the Castle ruins

The Committee discussed recent instances of anti-social behaviour, including vandalism and dangerous behaviour. Members expressed significant disappointment given the recent completion of significant and costly conservation work funded by third parties.

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

RESOLVED that the ruins be fenced off temporarily pending the determination of a more permanent solution to deterring anti-social and criminal behaviour and taken to Full Council for approval

Action:

The Parks and Estates Team would now formally record instances of anti-social behaviour on the Heritage Watch app;

Fencing to go to Full Council for approval

(f) Vegetation management

There was no update available on this, so it would be appear on the next agenda of the next meeting.

Action:

Schedule for the June meeting of the Committee

(g) Reopening of the Castle Motte to the public

There was no update available on this, so it would be appear on the next agenda of the next meeting.

Action:

Schedule for the June meeting of the Committee

590/23

ALLOTMENTS

(a) Highcroft

It was hoped that the legal issues - including ownership and maintenance – concerning the connecting bridge between the new Highcroft allotments and the existing Fir Tree site would be resolved soon. These had been holding up the transfer of the new allotments to the Town Council. However allocation of the new allotments was likely to begin very shortly.

(b) Skip for rubbish amnesty

The Committee discussed the possibility of providing a skip for a short period at the Fir Tree site for use by allotment holders. This was because a lot of rubbish had accumulated at the periphery of the site. However, when a skip had been provided formerly, members of the public had used it for additional, non-allotment related waste.

It was proposed by Councillor Lester, and seconded by Councillor Ebrahimjee, and

RESOLVED that skip be provided as a trial for a very short period of time with a clear indication of its purpose. Budget was available for this.

See also Minute 576/23 above

591/23

NEW ROAD GREEN SPACE

The development of this new sensory garden had been covered in the Seasonal Report by the Parks and Estates Manager (see Minute 576/23).

An official opening – possibly by a representative of Style Acre – would probably be organised for the summer

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

RESOLVED that a communications board be installed; budget was available for this

Action:

Parks and Estates Team to install communications board

592/23

REST GARDEN

The Committee considered an artist's brief for an art installation on the Rest Garden. This would be used to commemorate the accession of King Charles III. This has been developed at a meeting of the Public Arts Grant Working Group.

Some amends were suggested and accepted, including the requirement for the art installation to have some function.

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

RESOLVED that the brief be approved subject to amendments for consideration by the Full Council

Action:

Members to let Councillor Acreman have any further amends before Friday, 9 February 2024:

Schedule for the meeting of the Full Council on 19 February 2024

593/23

CLOSED CHURCHYARDS

The Chairman reported on the present arrangement for managing the closed churchyards of All Hallows, St Mary-le-More and St Leonard's. This was currently sub-contracted to the Town Council by South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) for which the Council was paid £1k per annum. The Town Council would need to give the District Council 12 months' notice if they wished to hand back the responsibility.

Action:

Chairman to discuss with the new Team Rector before bringing a final proposal to the next meeting of the Committee;

Schedule as a 'Future Agenda Item'

594/23

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The following items were identified for future meetings:

- Sustainability and environmental considerations for public events
- Verge cutting
- Agatha Christie bench – hard-standing
- Closed Churchyards
- Trees, Planters and Benches, Market Place
- Health and Safety Audit
- Vegetation management, Castle Gardens
- Reopening of the Castle Motte to the public
- Health and safety audit

595/23

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was proposed by Councillor Keats-Rohan, and seconded by Councillor Lester,
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 9.59 pm

Minutes of the meeting of the
Parks, Gardens, Allotments and Open Spaces Committee
held on
5 February 2024,
signed as a correct record

Chairman

2024-02-05 PKS minutes PUBLIC