

Present: The Chairman, Councillor Miss S Evans
The Mayor, Councillor Miss L Hillier (ex-officio)
Councillor D Eggleton
Councillor Miss S Miller
Councillor D Nimmo Smith
Councillor I Reissmann
Councillor S Smith
Councillor W Hamilton (substituting for Councillor Ms H Chandler-
Wilde)

In Attendance: Mrs N Taylor – Office Manager
Mrs B Walker – Minute Taker

Also Present: 1 member of the press
2 members of the public

22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Ms H Chandler-Wilde (Councillor W Hamilton was attending as her substitute).

23. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

Mr Martin Cresswell – Elmbank, Paradise Road – Minute 25 – Amenity Land Off Paradise Road and Leaver Road. Mr Cresswell explained that this area lies adjacent to his house and asked if the Council could consider improvements to the area as it feels neglected - he suggested upgrading the grassed area, undertaking repairs to the path and possibly installing benches or planting shrubs/flowers. The area also contains a large sycamore tree and a horse chestnut tree which he asked be inspected.

Mr Russell Carr – 47 Deanfield Avenue – Minute 25 – Amenity Land Off Paradise Road and Leaver Road. Mr Carr hoped that whatever decision the Council came to it would not encourage people to congregate in this area and also raised the possibility of it being developed as it is quite a large area.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

25. VARIATION TO ORDER OF BUSINESS

In accordance with the Standing Order 5 (a) (viii), it was **RESOLVED**

that in view of the member of the public present the Order of Business on the agenda is altered to allow Item 9 – Amenity Land off Paradise Road and Leaver Road to be considered next.

26. **AMENITY LAND OFF PARADISE ROAD AND LEAVER ROAD**

Members received and noted a report regarding the above area and considered the comments made by Mr Cresswell and Mr Carr during public question time. The Chairman asked members for their comments and the following points were made:-

- a brief history of the area was given – the area was residual land following the sale of the Deanfield Allotments by the Town Council in the mid-1980s for housing development (shared ownership) in conjunction with South Oxfordshire District Council (who were the Housing Authority). It was deemed that there were a surplus of allotments in the town at this time,
- a member extolled the values of open spaces in towns as they promote well-being, benefit wildlife, trees help reduce pollution etc.
- members noted this particularly open space is in an area of high density housing.
- members also noted that the Town Council had considered and rejected selling this area of land last year following an approach by an architect to build a “self-build” demonstration ecological dwelling. Continued support for this decision was given.
- It was noted this land does not have vehicular access
- it was suggested the Henley Wildlife Group be asked for any suggestions to promote wildlife on this site
- a member advised that an approach had been made by a dog whisperer looking for a piece of land which could be used for training dogs (including police dogs) in return for landscaping the area. This piece of land may suit this purpose although the question of noise had to be considered
- the Parks Manager to be asked to review the site and an update on the trees in this area to be given to this Committee

After further discussion the Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that, following consultation with the Parks Manager and the Henley Wildlife Group, a further report be bought to this Committee regarding the amenity land off Paradise Road including information on the condition of the trees; and

that the Mayor, Councillor Miss Lorraine Hillier contact the Dog Whisperer to find out further information regarding the request to use an area of land for dog training and to report back to this Committee for consideration as to whether the amenity land off Paradise Road is suitable; and

that the Town Council re-iterate its decision made last year to retain this amenity land as open space

The Chairman asked that if members had any suggestions to enhance this area of land they submit them to her for inclusion in the report.

27. **MINUTES**

- i. The minutes of the meeting of the Recreation and Amenities Committee held on 7 July 2015 were received, approved and adopted and were signed by the Chairman as a true record.
- ii. Members received and considered the minutes of the Henley in Bloom/Civic Pride Sub Committee held on 12 August 2015 including the recommendations therein and the following comments were made:-

- *Minute 24 – Thames and Chiltern in Bloom/Britain in Bloom/Entente Florale and Minute 25 – Henley in Bloom Awards*– a member questioned the value of up expenditure of up to £2450 on attendance at the Awards. It was confirmed that £650 of the £2450 referred to has been allocated for the Henley in Bloom Awards which are held in the Town Hall and is when the results of the Henley in Bloom Garden Awards (open to residents of Henley), the Henley in Bloom/Allotment Association Community Award, the Gardening Buddy of the Year Award and the Elizabeth Hodgkin Community Award (amongst others) are presented along with prizes (Toad Hall Garden Centre vouchers). The remainder (up to £1800) has been allocated for attendance at the Entente Awards in Bristol and the national Britain in Bloom Awards in Sunderland (for transport, accommodation and the meal at the Entente Awards). It was also confirmed that 4 people (rather than 6) will attend the Entente Awards and 4 will attend the national awards. It was noted it is a one-off to attend the national and Entente Awards in the same year.

The Chairman of Henley in Bloom, Councillor S Smith confirmed there was money in the budget and attendance at the Awards promoted Henley on Thames as does the work of In Bloom as a whole and recognises the amount of work in taking part in these campaigns. A Tourism Fair is taking place in Bristol the following day where entrants are invited to promote their towns/cities.

After further discussion the Committee **RESOLVED**

that the minutes of the Henley in Bloom/Civic Pride Sub Committee held on 12 August 2015 be received, approved and adopted

- iii. Members received and considered the minutes of the Parks Sub Committee held on 31 July 2015 including the recommendations therein and the following comments were made:-

Minute 8 – Moorings and Car Parking Management Accounts - a member referred to the paragraph where a member queried why the management accounts were included on the agenda when the Sub Committee does not have any control over budgets. He felt it was important and useful for members of the Sub Committee to be aware of overall income and expenditure of the amenity areas particularly when assessing and considering future provision of facilities in these areas.

Minute 7 – Co-Option of Members – a member queried why Councillor Eggleton was co-opted as a member of the Gainsborough Residents Association only and not as a Town Councillor as well. The Chairman referred to the Terms of Reference which states up to 5 Councillors be members of the Sub Committee. It was noted the Terms of Reference could be changed and after further discussion it was **RESOLVED**

that the Terms of Reference of the Parks Sub Committee be amended to permit “up to 6 Councillors” to be members to enable Councillor Dave Eggleton to sit on the Sub Committee in his capacity at a Town Councillor as well as Chairman of the Gainsborough Residents Association

Minute 10 – Consultation – a member asked for clarification of the consultation process. The Chairman advised that an initial small scale consultation had taken place at events held at Makins Recreation Ground and Freemans Meadow. These events were organised in part by SOHA (South Oxfordshire Housing Association) in conjunction with the Gainsborough Residents Association (Makins), NOMAD and YMCA. SOHA undertook the consultation and have agreed to help with further, wider consultation in the autumn subject to their workload.

28. BUDGET

- i. The Committee received and considered the management accounts to 31 July 2015.

A member queried why the expected out-turn consistently matched the budget figures as this appeared to make the figures meaningless. A member responded that as it is only 4 months in to the year it is to be expected that the budget figure and the expected spend would be the same, however the difference between the two (variance – the end column) may increase as the year progresses. It was suggested that when there is a variance the Accountant should be asked to include a note on why this has occurred.

The Committee **RESOLVED**

that the management accounts up to 31 July 2015 be noted.

- ii. The Committee received and considered a report by the Accountant on the preliminary considerations for the 2015 – 2016 budget and the following comments were made:-
- 3.1 a) *Obelisk at Mill Meadows and 3.1 c) Fairmile Cemetery and Chapels*
 - Councillor D Nimmo Smith suggested capitalising certain long term repairs (eg the Obelisk and the Chapels) which is a practice adopted by the County Council and offered to discuss this with the Accountant
 - 3.1 a) *Obelisk* - it was suggested that provision be made in the budget for an interpretation board for the Obelisk at Mill Meadows explaining its history of this grade II listed structure
 - 3.1 a) *Band Performances at Mill Meadows* - members were in favour of the allocation of a budget for bands at Mill Meadows but asked for additional information on how nearby towns operate their band performances eg Marlow, Reading, Wallingford as this may act a useful comparison and may suggest ways to improve Henley's system or confirm how well the system is currently run.
Action – information to be sought on whether and how nearby towns operate public performances of bands

Members felt it was a shame Henley did not have a band and the Mayor agreed to speak to the Henley Symphony Orchestra regarding the feasibility of starting one. It was confirmed local bands can play on the bandstand on a Saturday providing they book it with the Council Offices.

Action: the Mayor, who has contacts with the Henley Symphony Orchestra, ask their views on the feasibility of establishing a Henley Band

- 3.1 b) *Tree Works* – members supported the principle of having a programme of proactive tree works however requested more detail be

provided by the Parks Manager regarding how it would operate and the budget required – to be presented to the next meeting.

Action – a report on proactive tree works to be brought to the next Committee meeting.

- *Singers Park* – it was suggested this area be assessed as to whether money should be allocated in the 2015/16 budget for general improvements and repairs to the paving.

29. PROGRESS

The Committee received and considered a report on progress and made the following comments:-

Footpath signage – it was noted that this project is progressing and a report will be brought to this Committee.

Mill Meadows Car Park – members noted that the new contractor, Chipside, had commenced collection of Excess Charge Notices from 1 July 2015 and that a cashless payment system had also started on this date. Quarterly reports on ECN collection will be presented to this Committee eg January, April, July and October (or nearest meeting)

Toilet Refurbishment – quotes are being sought for replacement grab rails and kick plates.

Makins Recreation Ground Fencing – members were advised that planning permission had been obtained for the fencing at Mill Meadows as recommended at the last meeting. It was noted that the Scouts and the Henley Wildlife Group had expressed concern regarding the aesthetics of the fencing however it was acknowledged that health and safety implications were paramount in order to prevent accidents, fly-tipping etc and it was therefore important to provide an effective barrier to the very steep slope which is becoming more accessible as the knotweed eradication process progresses and the “green barrier” reduces.

Alternative options were mentioned for instance softening the look of the fencing with hedging however it was noted the eradication of the knotweed needs to be progress and the herbicide used may effect re-planting.

After further discussion it was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the fencing at Makins Recreation Ground be an agenda item for the next meeting and the Committee re-consider the options

Parkrun – the Chairman advised the proposer, Mr Charles Barr, is continuing to investigate options, including Freemans Meadow, Jubilee Park and Gillotts School and a further update would be brought to this Committee.

Regatta parking – Fairmile – members received and noted a letter of thanks from the Lions Club of Henley for allowing them, once again, to use the Fairmile Verges for parking during the Regatta which this year raised £2540. This money will be used to support local charities, organisations and some individuals.

The Committee **RESOLVED**

that the progress report be noted.

Skatepark – Makins Recreation Ground - A member noted an update on the Skatepark Funding Application to the Community Investment Fund was not on the progress report and informed members that a decision is due to be made by the

South Oxfordshire District Council later this month. An update will be brought to the next Committee meeting.

30. ALLOTMENT RENTS

The Committee received and considered two reports regarding the allotment rents for 2016/17 and 2017/18 (as one year's notice is required of any changes in allotment rent) following this item being referred back to Committee by Full Council (4 August 2015) with delegated powers to set the rents due to time constraints.

The first report provided additional information including comparisons with nearby towns, more detailed information regarding the costs associated with running the allotments and the views of the Henley Allotments Association (AA) who support the increases. It was noted a site meeting with Councillors D Eggleton, Miss S Evans and Miss H Chandler-Wilde (Councillor D Nimmo Smith is unable to attend) and representatives of the AA will take place on Thursday 8 October 2015 when the current and possible future facilities on offer at the allotments will be discussed. The second report was the original report considered by this Committee on 7 July 2015 which outlines the proposed rent increases.

A discussion ensued and the following comments were made:-

- the AA represent the views of allotment holders rather than potential allotment holders
- £42.50 for a 10 pole plot is not a small sum of money for some families and may deter people from taking on an allotment
- in contrast another member noted £42.50 equates to less than £1 a week which he felt was very good value. He also advised that the majority of plots are now 5 poles, as this size is far more manageable and the proposed cost for 5 poles is £21.50
- it was noted the AA would prefer gentle increases held for 2 years rather than less frequent but larger increases. Having an increase every 2 years helps reduce administrative costs (the rents for 2014/15 and 2015/16 are the same).

After further discussion it was **RESOLVED**

that the allotment rents for the years 1 October 2016 to 31 September 2017 and 1 October 2017 to 31 September 2018 be as follows (note a concession of approximately 1/3 is given to those over 65 years of age):-

2 – 3 poles	£16.50
with concession	£10.50
3.5 – 5 poles	£21.50
with concession	£14.50
7 poles	£31.00
with concession	£20.50
10 poles	£42.50
with concession	£28.00

31. FIRST CHAPEL, FAIRMILE CEMETERY – THE ORWELL CENTRE

Members received and considered a report of a meeting held on 2 July 2015 with Mr P Burness-Smith and Mr J Bowles regarding an update on the proposed use for the First Chapel as a museum to George Orwell.

The Chairman and the Mayor advised that it had been a very positive meeting and Mr Burness-Smith is also investigating the possibilities of working with the River and Rowing Museum, the Literary Festival and the Town Centre Manager as a way of promoting the year round appeal of George Orwell projects in Henley.

A discussion took place and the following points were made:-

- progress on this project has been exceedingly slow
- members were reminded that the First Chapel was leased to Mr Burness-Smith until 2030 with a peppercorn rent and no break clauses
- the Town Council is responsible for the upkeep of the external fabric of the building and the tenant for the inside – both Chapels are Grade II listed
- quarterly update meetings with Mr Burness-Smith would be beneficial

Councillor I Reissmann was unable to attend the meeting held on 24 July 2015 but would be keen to attend future meetings.

After further discussion the Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the update of the meeting with Mr P Burness-Smith and Mr J Bowles regarding the First Chapel being used as a museum to George Orwell held on 24 July 2015 be noted

that the Chairman, Councillor Miss S Evans contact Mr Burness-Smith to invite him to attend quarterly meetings with the Town Council to ensure regular updates are obtained. Membership of these meetings to include Councillor I Reissmann

32. POLICY FOR GRANTING USAGE OF MILL/MARSH MEADOWS

Members received and considered the Town Council's policy for granting usage of Mill and Marsh Meadows and the following comments were made:-

- a member queried point xii on page 2 which says “no fires including BBQs, flame throwers” at organised events and queried whether this meant BBQs at organised events such as the May Fair were not permitted. It was noted that point iii allowed exemptions from specific rules however after discussion it was **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the words “except by specific permission” be added to point xii on page 2 to enable BBQs to be permitted on Mill Meadows at organised events (subject to the grass being protected from burn marks)

- members felt the distinction between Mill and Marsh Meadows should be emphasised eg Mill Meadows being the more formal area and Marsh Meadows the more rural and natural area which contains the majority of the Wildlife Area. It was therefore felt Marsh Meadows should be afforded more protection within the policy with regard to the number and type of

events that are held on it. It was also noted the words “Mill” should be deleted from the second and third sentence of the third paragraph on the first page.

It was noted that Marsh Meadows is often waterlogged which is a natural barrier for over use re organised events.

The Committee **RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND**

that the Town Clerk be asked to amend the wording of the third bullet point at the top of the first page to emphasise the distinction between Mill and Marsh Meadows and particularly the extra sensitivity required for Marsh Meadows

Post Meeting note: the following wording is suggested:-

- ***the different characteristics of Mill and Marsh Meadows be taken into consideration when granting permission for their use. Mill Meadows being a more formal area while Marsh Meadows is a more natural and rural area with sections dedicated to the enhancement of wildlife.***
- the Town Clerk having delegated powers was queried, however it was felt this was necessary to allow flexibility regarding certain requests particularly with regard to time constraints – for instance a request from a film company to film in a week’s time. It was noted that delegated powers were not used for major events.
- It was noted the words of the resolution on page 3 be amended from “Mill Meadows and River Sub Committee” to the “relevant Sub Committee”

The meeting ended at 9.03 pm.

bw

Chairman